THE SAINTS Support & Comfort,

IN

The Time of Distress and Danger,

with divers other Treatises.

Delivered in severall Sermons upon Divers Texts of Scripture.

By that Learned and Judicious Divine *John Cotton*, of *Boston* in *New-England*.

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GODS MERCY IN HIS Peoples deliverance.

REVEL. 3. 20.

Behold I ſtand at the doore and knocke, if any man heare my voyce and open the doore, I will come in to him, and will ſupp with him, and be with me.

IN theſe words obſerve a note of attention and of admiration, in this word [*Behold*] for [*Behold*] ever requires attention; and often in Scripture, admiration, as *Eſa.* 7. 14. *Behold, a Virgin ſhall conceive and beare a Sonne*, &c. 1. *Behold*: Attend to it, and conſider it, and *Behold* it with admiration, ſo heere; *Behold*, conſider it well, and ſtand and wonder that God ſhould *ſtand at*

the doore and knocke there and offer such conditions there, that if any man will open the doore, and hee will enlarge his goodnesse and grace so farre to such, as that he will come in and feast with them.

The first part is a note of attention and admiration, and then the matter to be attended unto what to *behold.*

In the matter of attention, there is,

First, a double act of God, preventing us and going before any care of ours in our turning to God: *Standing and knocking.*

Secondly, a double act of ours, following this double act of God. Heare my voyce, *Open the doore.*

Thirdly, Behold also a double act of God, that follows this double act of ours, *I will come in unto him, and supp with him:* I Feast with him, and be feasted of him: These be the parts.

A necessary counsell and charge to all the people of God, that live in a Church subject to lukewarmenesse, that have some affections stirred up, but with much want of fervency and life of grace.

This whole verse may bee fitly opened to you in opening three principall notes, carrying an end the sence of the whole Scripture.

First, when our Saviour saith, *Behold I stand at the doore and knocke,* &c. Wee are first to enquire, what this *doore* is, which wee shall see in this one Doctrine.

That

That the heart of a man is the doore of the soule. Doct.

The heart is the way of the entrance of God into the soule, or into the whole man: For, when the Holy Ghost will give us an example of this very thing of the opening of the *doore*, speaking of *Lydia*, he expresseth it thus, whose *heart the Lord opened*, Acts 16. 14. the doore to be opened, was the heart of *Lydia*, that was it, at which Christ *stood and knocked*, and that she opened unto him, and so *Psal.* 24. 7, 9. *Be yee lift up you everlasting doores*, and what are those doores: but the hearts of men? They are not the doores of a mans house, nor the gates of a city, for they will bee consumed, but these be everlasting doores, and such as into which the *king of Glory must enter*, and they must be inlarged, this is certainely meant of the heart of man, and of the will of man which dwels in the heart.

Now for the Reason, why the heart is called the doore: for you might say, if the heart of a man be the doore of the soule, what is the inward chaire of the soule, what is more inward, then the heart of a man? Satan can tell what is in a mans fancy and many times what is in a mans heart that hee knowes not, if there be any secret in a man it is in his heart and will: Why is it then that he cals the most inmost closet of the soule, the doore of the soule?

It is called the doore of the soule, because Reason.

of that authority that the heart and will hath over the whole ſoule, and the power it hath to rule both ſoule and body. As in cities, the ſtrength of the city is in the gates, there was their Seates of Iuſtice in thoſe dayes, and there was munition ſtored up for war, ſo that open the gates to an enemy, and you give him all, this commands all; give the heart of a man, and you have a free paſſage into the whole man, if a man get the gates of a city, he hath all: So give God the heart, and then you give him the whole ſoule and body too, *Iohn* 10. 7, 9. *I am the doore, by me if any man enter hee ſhall be ſaved:* Take Chriſt, and you take ſalvation with him: you take Heaven with you, and all the bleſſings of God at once, that if Hee be opened unto you, there is nothing denied you, of all the living treaſures of the grace of God, have Him, and you have a ſtrong entrance into your owne ſalvation, have Him and you have a good calling to any perſonall eſtate, in Family, Church or commonwealth: ſo in this reſpect our Saviour cals the heart of a man the doore; give God the heart, and you give him authority over your whole ſoule, in the whole courſe of your life. And therefore God ſaith, *Prov.* 23. 26. *My ſonne give me thy heart*; as if a Prince lying before the gates of a city, give him the gates, and you reſigne your ſelves in ſubjection to ſuch a Prince, and ſo is it heere.

Vſe. It doth ſhew you how farre ſhort wee are from giving God any poſſeſſion within us, any hold of

us, as long as wee content our ſelves with any meaſures of knowledge and grace, and doe not change and open the heart: If that a man were filled with all the treaſures of knowledge and wiſedome, and fully inlightned in his minde and judgement, ſo as hee may know the whole body of the Scriptures, and if God have this, and onely this, hee hath yet nothing, *he ſtands at the doore:* yea if this man ſhould come off with many good affections, ſometimes with griefe for ſinne; and ſometimes trembling at the word; and ſometimes joy in hearing; as *Herod* rejoyced in *Iohns* Doctrine; and *Ahab* grieved at the threatning, and *Felix* trembled, and *Iehu* was zealous in executing the word of the Lord, and yet God had as yet no part in any of them: Chriſt ſtood yet without doores, and had no part in *Herod*, *Ahab* or *Iehu*, &c. no place within them, yet if a man were as forward as *Herod* to reforme many things, *Mark.* 6.20. yet if Chriſt have not the heart, hee hath nothing. And therefore this calleth upon us all, never to reſt in any beginnings of grace, nor in any meaſures of grace whatſoever they bee, untill God have the heart, till our wils receive and imbrace him, and ſo open to him, that hee may come in conquering to conquer, and in ſubduing to ſubdue, our judgements and paſſions, and affections and ſpeeches, that God may paſſe through our whole man freely without diſturbance, till then God hath nothing: It is true you may give a Prince the gates of a City, and yet hee may finde diſturbance

bance and battle in the market place; and ſo it is with many of the ſervants of God, though wee have given the heart to God, and hee hath taken poſſeſſion thereof with ſome entrance into the whole man, yet when hee comes to meete with us in this and that buſineſſe wherein our affections are moſt ſtirring, there is ſome way or other, ſome inſurrections made againſt God. Many times worldly buſines and ſtrength of luſts may oppoſe much; but if indeed God have our hearts given him, then though hee have worke enough with us, to ſubdue our pride and worldlineſſe and wantonneſſe, and other diſtempers in us, hee ſhall have ſomething to doe when hee comes to theſe paſſages wherein nature is more ſtirring, many skirmiſhes there will bee againſt God, but if wee have once given God the heart, in time hee will have all, and though hee meete with many skirmiſhes, yet hee will prevaile in the end: ſo that let not men ſatisfie themſelves in giving God any part of their lives in the whole courſe of their converſation, or any affections, but give him the heart, and when hee hath that then hee will take the reſt, with-hold that and give him all the reſt, and hee makes account you give him nothing.

Come wee then to the ſecond point, and to ſpeake more fully of that,

Doctrine 2. *The patience and bounty of God is great towards ſinners, even admirable great in calling them home to himſelfe.*

It is worthy all admiration to behold this patience

ence of God. This is expreſt in the two firſt acts of God; it is very great patience of God, that he will ſtand and waite upon us, it is not a word of courſe that is there uſed to fill up the ſentence, but it expreſſeth that in which we would expreſſe our patience, if wee ſtood at a mans doore from day to day, and from weeke to weeke with ſtrong deſires to enter into it, is not that patience? And therefore when hee ſaith, *I ſtand*, it argues the patience of God.

And this argues his bounty too, that hee not onely ſtands there, but hee uſes vehement and effectuall meanes to bee heard, and ſuch meanes as by which hee might make way for opening to himſelfe: Firſt, for Gods patience that this is done by God in calling us home to him, that is the very ſcope of our Saviour in this Text.

And for his ſtanding at the *doore*, ſee his Patience in that *Rom.*10.21. *All the day long have I ſtretched out my hand*, &c. it was a long ſtanding, and that day is not meant a naturall or artificiall day, but a long ſeaſon of grace, *Luke* 13.7. *Theſe three yeares have I ſtayed and looked for fruite*, three yeers God ſtaied for it, Yea, you reade, *Pſalm.*95.10. God complaines, *Fourty yeeres long was I grieved with this generation*: Fourty yeers God ſometimes ſtayes before hee will threaten, *that they ſhall never enter into his reſt*: yea yet longer; *My Spirit ſhall not alwaies ſtrive with man*, *Gen.*6.3,5. the ſonnes of God, the beſt of mankinde are become fleſh; yet his dayes ſhall bean hundred and twenty yeares, hee will ſtay for that generation before

fore hee bring the flood an hundred and twenty years.

But that I may more fully expresse to you the patience of God in staying thus for us, let mee shew you it in 4. particulars.

1. First, in staying long before hee doe take any notice of sinne, hee saith nothing though wee sinne, and continue in sinne, and multiply transgressions against him day after day, and yeare after yeare: God takes no notice of any thing wee doe, but carries it, as if he saw it not, and heard it not, *Psal*,50.20,21. *I held my tongue and said nothing:* I stayed so long as that thou thoughteſt I did approve of thy evill courses, he thinks God lookes at him now, as hee did twenty or thirty, or fourty, or an hundred yeares agoe, and hee never found checke in his soule for what hee had done, nor any judgement of God upon him in any remarkable manner, so as hee thinkes hee hath done no evill.

2. Secondly, another act of his patience is not onely a holding his peace so long, but when he doth beginne to stirre, hee doth alwayes usually threaten before hee strike, *Amos* 4.11,12. *because I will doe thus unto thee O Israel, prepare to meet thy God,* hee usually threatens before hee strikes: hee seldome doth strike, at least irrecoverably, till hee give men warning.

3. Thirdly, when hee threatens, hee will not yet strike, but will yet stay a good time after he hath threatned, *Hos.*11.7,8,9. *My bowels are turned within me for thee,* so that God when hee is about

to

to ſtrike, it comes into his minde, how ſhall I doe it, what would become of thee, if I ſhould take this courſe with thee, and ſo leave thee hopeleſſe and helpeleſſe for after time.

Fourthly, he doth not onely ſo; but ſuppoſe he doe ſtrike (as uſually he doth) in the end, if all this prevaile not, yet ſee how long hee ſtands, hee doth with-draw his blow when hee hath ſtricken, he doth not ſtirre up all his wrath, but with-holds the fierceneſſe of his diſpleaſure, at leaſt for a good time, and rather gives warning then breaks forth in his full diſpleaſure, *Pſ.* 78.38. *Many a time he turned his anger away and did not ſtirre up all his wrath*; Hee did expreſſe his diſpleaſure, and ſometimes afflicted ſome of them, and ſometimes others of them; but did not conſume them utterly: See it in the example of *Davids* carriage to *Saul*, when hee cut off the skirt of his garment, hee might as well have cut off his life: So *Saul* when hee was riding to *Damaſcus*, to deſtroy all them that called on the name of the Lord Ieſus, Chriſt meetes him, and ſtrikes him downe to the ground, and ſtrucke him blinde; hee might as eaſely have ſtrucke him dead, and ſo hath done many, *Act.* 9.4,8. The ſame ſtroke that ſtrucke him to the ground, might have ſtrucke him into the grave, and from thence into the nethermoſt hell, but where had then beene all *Pauls* gratious Epiſtles and glorious ſufferings, and therefore well may wee ſay, God was willing to ſhew an example of long-ſuffering towards him, elſe

when God had ſtrucke him downe hee would have there have let him lyen, and not let him riſe againe and given him leave to heare more good counſell, that hee might turne to God, and become a new man, as hee did, which ſhews you the wonderfull patience of God before he fall upon a creature in the utmoſt of his diſpleaſure.

Secondly, Behold alſo the bounty of God towards poore ſinners, when he cals them home to him: *I ſtand at the doore and knocke*, that expreſſeth ſome vehement urging that ſinners might open to him.

Now what are theſe ſtroakes of God by which hee doth expreſſe this knocking?

1. Firſt, he ſtrikes with the hammer of his word, as many doores have hammers hanging at them, that make a ſhrill and a loud noyſe, that will waken men though they were a ſleepe; ſo God compares his Word to an hammer, *Ier.* 23. 29. Sometimes, puts ſuch weight upon his Word, that the Word ſpoken by the Miniſters of God, to the hearts and conſciences of men, rings a loud noyſe in the eares of men; ſo as afterwards they cannot eat, nor ſleep for thinking of the ſad noyſe that word did ring in their ears.

2. But 2. He knockes alſo by his judgements, and knockes a loud; there is not any ſickeneſſe befalls us or ours, not any loſſe in our eſtates, not any kind of evill that befals the places where we live, ſo farre as it reaches us: but it is a knocke of Gods hand to turne to him, *Acts* 16. 26.

When

When the Earth was ſmitten with a great earthquake, ſoas that the priſon doores were opened, and the power of God in them both did ſhake the heart of the Gaioler, that out of bed hee leapes, and to the priſon hee comes, and there had like to have ſlaine himſelfe, fearing the Priſoners had beene fled; but ſeeing none of them was run away, it pleaſed God ſo to ſtrike in with that ſtroake, that hee preſently fals downe and cries out; *Sirs, what muſt I doe to bee ſaved?* When a judgement comes and makes the foundations of a mans heart to ſhake, it ſets his ſpirit a trembling, and puts him into a feare, ſo awakened with the power of God, expreſſed in ſome Iudgement, that hee knowes not what to doe. You know how mightily God *knocked* at *Pharaohs* heart, when as in ſundry of the latter judgements, the Text ſaith, *That heſends for* Moſes *in haſte, and confeſſeth that the Lord is righteous, and that he had ſinned*, and comes off very ſeriouſly, as if he would now wholy yeeld to Gods will, though before hee had ſaid, who is the Lord, ſuch a mighty power is in the judgements of God.

Thirdly, There is another voyce of God that knocks, and God in that ſhewes much bounty; and that is when God is pleaſed to knocke at the doores of our hearts by the worke of his Spirit; by opening our conſcience, which is as a fortreſſe before the doores of our hearts; as in many great cities there are ſome out-workes to defend the gates; God ſo convinces the 3.

conſcience, and inlightens the minde, and informes the judgement, and the memory and affections; ſo as that all the out-workes of the ſoule are ſubdued, whereby it comes to paſſe they profeſſe to God that if hee will but ſpare them to a certaine further time, they will doe whatſoever God commands them; this many times fals out, that God takes hold of the minde and judgement and conſcience, and affections, ſo as nothing ſtands out but only the very doore, the heart is onely ſhut, *Iohn* 16.9. *They are convinced of ſinne, of righteouſneſſe and of judgement*, which argues that the Spirit of God when hee comes, he will inlighten the minde, and convince the judgement, and let the world plainely ſee that their way is wrong, and that they are yet in a damnable eſtate, becauſe they beleeve not in him; this is one of the ſtrongeſt knocks of God, when the minde and judgement is convinced, and the heart ready to condemne it ſelfe, and acknowledge that if it ſhould now ſtand out any longer, the caſe would proove dangerous. And when God takes this paines, is there not a plentifull expreſſion of his bounty to us.

4. Fourthly, There is onely one ſtroake more which God many times doth follow the reſt withall, and alwayes doth when hee intends to knocke prevailingly, and it is this: Hee doth many times breake open the doore of the heart, though wee bee unready and unliſty to open, hee lets fall in ſome ſavour of the Lord Ieſus, and

and ſome reliſh of the Spirit of Adoption, *Cant.* 5.4,5. that though the heart bee drowſie and dead in ſinne, yet it begins to ariſe and open to Chriſt; and then though Chriſt bee gone, yet the heart runnes after him, and though ſhee cannot of a long time finde him, yet ſhee continues to ſeeke him; and this is when the Spirit of Adoption hath made it a broken heart.

Now, why ſhould God bee thus wonderfull patient and bountifull in ſtanding and knocking at the doors of our hearts?

The firſt and principall reaſon is taken from God himſelf, and it is from the purpoſe he hath to glorifie the riches of his mercy and grace to poor ſinners, notable is that ſpeech, and remember it for ever, & let it ſink deep into your hearts like Myrrh which may preſerve your ſavour, *Eſa.* 30.18. Therfore will the Lord wait that hee may be gracious to us: This is the firſt Reaſon, why God will thus waite and ſtand and knocke, and tarry our leiſure, that hee might exalt the glory of his rich grace towards us, if the King or ſome great man ſhould ſtand waiting long at our doore, if hee ſhould ſtand ten, twenty or an hundred yeers, you would thinke he debaſed himſelfe, to ſtand waiting ſo long on ſuch wretches as wee are; but Gods thoughts are not like mans, when hee waits long; it is that hee might bee gracious, and hee will bee exalted in ſo doing: waiting and exalting is put the one to expreſſe the other: They interpret *Reaſon* 1.

and expound one another, to magnifie the riches of his patience, hee will waite and not bee weary of waiting, ſometimes for ſome ſcores of yeeres together, and indeed God is not diſappointed, for ſuch hee will prevaile with in his own time to open to him, 1 *Tim.* 1.14,16,17. *The grace of God was exceeding aboundant towards me, I was a blaſphemer and injurious, a perſecutor* &c. *but the grace of God was exceeding aboundant towards me,* and hee tels you wherein God ſhewed forth his long ſufferance to me, as a pattern of all thoſe that ſhould afterwards beleeve: And ſee how he ends that ſpeech, *verſ.* 17. *Now to the King immortall, to the onely wiſe God be power and glory for ever.* Thus you ſee what this waiting of God wrought, hee waites and knockes that hee might bee exalted in that day; that when they ſee, what a dangerous eſtate they are in, and yet ſee how patiently God hath forborne them, and bountifully expreſſed himſelf towards them, and ſee in the end God hath broken in upon them, and will no longer ſtand: then this grace was exceeding aboundant towards me, and now God is exalted: the mouth is for ever after open to Gods praiſe.

2 *Reaſon* taken from the will and purpoſe of God for the ſalvation of our ſoules. God is not ſlacke, when hee is ſo ſlow in powring out his devouring judgements, but patient to us ward, (2 *Pet.* 3.9.) who would have no man to periſh, but all men to come to repentance: this is the Reaſon why hee is thus patient, and long-ſuffering, that we might not

not perish, but might come to the knowledge of his will: if God were not patient towards us all, and knocked but once or twice, wee had beene crushed into the nethermost hell, where had all his glorious Saints in Heaven, and all his gracious servants in Earth beene, if hee had not beene a patient, and bountifull God; but hee is not willing we should perish. Every child of God had perished and that everlastingly, had not God magnified his patience toward them. He did not stirre up all his wrath. Because, *Hee remembred we were but flesh, a blast of wind that goes away, and returnes not againe, Psal.* 78.38,39. as if he should say, if God when wee provoke his patience, and stand out long against him, should then stirre up all his wrath, wee should have no hope to turne to God, for wee are but dust, blowne away and returne not againe. If God strike a man with death, what hope is there that hee shall returne againe: where had *Paul* beene if hee had beene strucke to death as well as to the earth, hee had never returned then to have seene the light of the living. God therefore that considers what sorry things wee bee, and that if hee should but stirre up all his wrath, wee should bee utterly undone, hee will therefore stay many yeers, before he poure out all his wrath, and utterly consume us. *Reason* 3.

Hee waites and knockes long to leave all flesh without excuse that will not turne to Him, *Rom.* 1. 20. speaking of such as had but the light of nature, yet men are left without excuse, that they do *Reason* 4.

doe not acknowledge God, and glorifie him as God, how much more when hee endures with long patience, and such loud and vehement knocking at the hearts of men; and sometimes by taking the out-workes of the soule, the minde and judgement, and affections *&c.* he will leave men without excuse, if after all this they will stand out against him.

Vse 1. To leade us to Repentance, *Rom.*2.4,5. it is a pregnant place to this purpose; *Despisest thou the patience and bounty, and long-sufferance of God*, &c. See what vehement reasons the Apostle useth to perswade and urge us to take advantage heereby to turne unto God by Repentance. See how hee glorifies these attributes of God by casting shame upon us, if wee repent not. *Despisest thou*, who speakes hee of? Hee speakes to the *Romanes*, the great Lords of the world at that day, for none of the Nations were like unto them, for prowesse and government and authority and yet despisest thou? Thou *Romane*, what thou that hast beene exalted above all Nations, thou whom God hath so highly advanced and adorned with all manner of excellencies, as if hee should say; Thou: Who art thou, or what art thou at the best, who art thou that thou shouldest despise the bounty of God, thou whom God hath brought up from so meane a condition, is it for thee to stand contesting with God; let mee tell thee whoever thou beest, it is not for mortall men, dust and ashes, a blast to despise the patience and bounty of God; so that the Apostle doth

doth ſtrongly preſſe this duty of Repentance by an argument taken from the patience and bounty of God. How therefore ſhould this awaken the heart of every one that heares mee this day, call every (thou) every one of your ſoules by name, and ſay, what thou, whom God hath beene ſo patient too, twenty, thirty, fourty, an hundred yeers (Thou) whom hee hath viſited with ſo much ſickeneſſe, (Thou) whom God hath brought from a meane condition, to a large meaſure of eſtate, (Thou) whom God hath beene thus patient too; *deſpiſeſt thou the patience of God?* preſſe this upon your hearts, and abuſe his patience no longer.

And conſider another argument. The bountie and long ſufferance of God; conſider your danger, hee intends to terrifie the heart of the moſt ſtubborne ſinner, with what hee ſpeakes in *verſe* 5. *Thou treaſureſt up wrath againſt the daie of wrath, Treaſureſt up wrath*, there is not a man that ſtands out the patience of God, but this is his caſe, *he treaſures up wrath againſt the day of wrath.* A treaſure conſiſts not in trifles and ſorry things, though a man have ſtore of them, treaſures are choiſe things, and variety and ſtore of ſuch things makes a treaſure: Now what would the Apoſtle awake the heart to ſee and know? that a man that doth deſpiſe the patience and bounty of God, hee doth procure to himſelfe ſpeciall, rare, choyſe and extraordinary wrath and judgement, not onely one or two, but variety, choiſe and ſtore, upon body, ſoule and con-

ſcience upon children and eſtate left behinde. And therefore ſuffer the word of Exhortation, and receive this counſell from the Apoſtle, and that to your hearts, if you doe not turne to God, when hee thus turnes to you, you will bee upbraided by God, *deſpiſeſt thou*; or elſe the wrath of God, will in the end betreaſured up in ſuch rare and ſingular judgements upon you, that hee that heares of it, both his eares ſhall tingle; Neighbours and Friends ſhall ſtand amazed to ſee the woefull judgements that befals thee: Now therefore delay the time no longer, deſpiſe Gods patience no more; treaſure up no more wrath, there is enough gone out already, but even now turne to God with all thy heart.

Vſe 2. To teach ſinners not utterly to deſpaire, though ſometimes they have ſtood out long againſt God; for God is indeed patient and long-ſuffering, hee ſtands and that very long: You ſee what paines hee takes, and ſtill ſtands to ſee if wee will open to him; and therefore let no man be diſcouraged, what if thou haſt ſtaied three yeers, what if fourty, what if a hundred and twenty yeers, yet all this time God hath ſtayed; let it not now hinder thee from turning to God, for feare hee ſhould deſpiſe thee, or ſo much wrath belongs to thee, as is mercileſſe. It is true, men may juſtly ſo feare, but as long as God waites, and eſpecially ſo long as hee knockes, there is ſome hope, if thou wilt but open there is hope.

But

But you say, how shall I know that God stands knocking? If a man bee growne old in sinne, and his conscience seared as with an hot yron: that hee descerns not a knocke of God in his heart, then time is past with him. But as long as God stands and knocks, so long hee hath a mind to enter.

But how shall I know whether hee knocke or no?

Doth God hammer thy conscience, and all as upon an Anvell, the case is dangerous; but if God strike and thou feelest it, there is yet hope, or if some judgement befall thee, say it bee some inward anguish of soule, and doth it bring thee down and set thee a wrastling for grace, now God is a knocking: And if thou findest the Lord convincing thy conscience and possesse thy minde and judgement of the danger of thy estate, and if thou seest out of the Word, that God is now a laying siege to thy soule, surprizing the out-works thereof, accusing and condemning thy conscience, all this while there is hope in *Israel*, unlesse thou at length provoke God to further wrath, yet God waites still, that he may be gracious to exalt his mercy, and the aboundant riches of his grace and his long-sufferance; therefore bee not discouraged, but now take opportunity, least thou goe on to despise and seale up wrath against thee.

Vse 3. To teach all those who have had experience of this patience and bounty of God, leading you to repentance, and have found comfort

in it, now live cheerfully and magnifie the rich Name of the Lord Jesus, and his glorious bounty, and hold it foorth as a patterne to all about thee, that thou hast stood out so long against so many warnings and expressions and manifestations of Gods bounty, since that is the end God aymes at, let now his name and his great patience and bounty bee magnified and speake of it from one generation to another, that the memory of it may not dye.

Doctrine 3. *Such as doe heare the voyce and knocks of Christ and doe open the doore of their hearts to him, hee will vouchsafe fellowship with them, familiar and continuall fellowship with them, feasting of them and be feasted by them.*

To heare the voyce of Christ, is to heare it with a boared eare, and with regard and reverence, hee so heares, as hee never forgets what God speaks, he hears with an everlasting ear, *Iam.1.24,25,26. Mine ears hath God opened, Psa.40.6.* God hath digged into a mans ears (so it is in the Originall) so *Esa.50.4,5. The Lord hath opened mine eare, so that I was not rebellious nor turned backe*, *Iohn 6.45.* hee heares with an everlasting eare, it is a sound that never goes out of his eare, whether God speake to him in his Word, or in his judgements, or by the voyce of his Spirit in his heart and conscience, hee hath heard the voyce of his rod, *Micah 6.9.* this is hearing with a digged eare: Such an hearing as *David* saith, *I will never forget thy precepts, Psalme 119.*

But how then are wee ſaid to open the doore?

By theſe ſeverall acts.

Firſt, We open to Chriſt, when wee beleeve all that God hath ſpoken: for wee may heare and underſtand much, but our hearts beleeve it not, and then we doe not open the doore of faith, and ſo doe not open our hearts, if wee open the heart wee give up our hearts to God to imbrace whatever hee hath ſpoken, *Act.* 14.27. Wee beleeve the truth of the Word, and give credence and have aſſurance of the certainty and goodneſſe of it to our ſouls, when we are able to ſay; good is the Word of the LORD, this is the key of Faith.

Secondly, Wee open the doore of our hearts, when wee goe to God and openly confeſſe from our hearts all the deſpight and contempt we have put Gods grace too, when wee in confeſſion open the mouth and the heart together, and confeſſe that all God hath ſpoken to us of our dangerous courſe, hath beene the Word of his truth and goodneſſe, when wee confeſſe former and latter ſins, and judge our ſelvs as unworthy of any mercy, he that thus confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſins ſhall find mercy, *Pro.* 28.13. he that keepes his heart faſt lockt, hee keepes out God, and hardens his heart from good counſell, hee ſhall fall into miſchiefe, and for him there is no remedy, *Prov.* 29.1. but if wee confeſſe our ſinne unto God; this is the way to ſoften and open the heart.

Thirdly, If wee have made God ſtay long before wee open to him, this will further be found: Wee open our hearts, when as wee deſire to give up our hearts and ſoules to God, not onely to receive him and his grace, but even to yeelde profeſſed ſubjection to the Goſpell of Chriſt; when our hearts profeſſe, it is too long that wee have ſtood out ſo many knockes, but now for time to come, we yeeld and offer our ſoules to God, not to leave an hoofe behind; but now Chriſt ſhall have minde and judgement and conſcience, all our indeavours, all that wee are or can bee, 2 *Cor.* 9.13. when wee yeeld every thought to profeſſed ſubjection to Chriſt and his Goſpell, when wee will not allow our ſelves in any paſſage of ſinne, but yeeld up our ſelves, ſoules and bodies and ſpirits and all to bee guided by him, to doe and ſuffer his will, that we may be delivered from the wrath to come.

Now ſuppoſe we do thus, what will God then do to us?

Why Chriſt will vouchſafe familiar communion with us, hee will come in and dwell with us; to dwell with a man is to continue with him, and to grow to more familiar fellowſhip with him, give him your heart, and then he will never depart from you, *Ier.* 32.40.

He will ſup with us, and we with him.

That implyes ſtill more familiar communion with him.

Wee are ſaid to *ſup* with God: Firſt, when he doth

doth refresh us, set before us the fat things of his grace, set before us the Lord Iesus Christ, and gives us his holy Spirit, set before us peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and all the gifts and graces of his Spirit, invites us to his Ordinances, and sets before us the comfort of them.

1 He gratiously invites us to his Ordinances, 2 and there sets before us Christ and his benefits, 3 and then at supper time hee carves us out some choise portion reserved for us, he gives us a testimony of our welcome in the dishes of his ordinances, and in the meate in them Christ, and in the benefits hee carves out to us, he saith, here is a part for thee sonne or daughter, here is not a dish upon the Table, but thou hast thy part in it, God will so take order, not one benefit of Christ Iesus, not a Sermon, not a Sacrament, not a blessing in Christian communion, but there is something in them to feed thee, and therefore see thou be strengthened and comforted in them, and built up by them, there is nothing but something is for thee, no promise but its thine, no Commandement but it belongs to thee, no example but for your good and imitation, and then are we said to sup with him.

But when is hee said to suppe with us?

1. When hee will be present with us in every duty, when hee shewes us his presence and 2. assistance in every performance, and when hee not onely shewes his presence and assistance, but is pleased 3. to accept this and that duty, we offer

offer him our ſervice, and indeavours and deſires, whereby wee bid him welcome to our houſe, and then hee ſhews us his acceptance of our duties, it is our meate and drinke to performe Chriſtian duties in a Chriſtian manner, when you little think that God takes notice of them, yet hee accepts it all. And,

Firſt, Chriſt will rejoyce in us. Secondly, ſome poore Chriſtians that joyne with us ſhall be glad to heare of ſuch expreſſions come from us; the loynes and bowels of poore Chriſtians ſhall be refreſhed, and it ſhall bee as much comfort to them, as if you had layed a good morſell upon his trencher. And all from this; becauſe wee have heard Chriſts voyce and opened unto him; if there bee firſt a willing mind it is accepted, 2 *Cor.*8.12. If God give us grace to performe any poore duty with a willing mind, hee accepts it, this is the beſt entertainement we had for him, and the beſt courſes wee can take, we could wiſh our entertainement were better for him; but it is ſufficient, for it is accepted.

Vſe 1. It is of Exhortation to all that never knew what it was to ſit downe at table with God, this is commended to you; *If any man will heare my voyce, if he will but open the doore I will come in to him*, doſt thou deſire to bee entertained at the Lords Table, or when thou commeſt to any ordinance of God, wouldeſt thou have the Lord Ieſus Chriſt to bid thee wellcome, this is the courſe that is commended to thee, ſet open an everlaſting eare to hearken what this day is ſpo-

ſpoken to thee, conſider all the good counſell God hath given you out of his Word, *harden not your hearts as in the day of provocation*, let none of the ſeeds of Gods word fall to the ground in vain, but what you have once heard, heare it for ever, *Hebr.* 2.1,2. You have this day heard of the great patience and rich grace and large bounty of God, let not the word of his grace fall to the ground in vaine, call it to minde and beleeve the truth of it, and in beleeving of it profeſſe your hearts to God in an hearty confeſſion, that indeede you have ſtood out long againſt him, and againſt all his bounty, and truth, beſeech him to breake open the ſtony doores of your heart, and burſt the barrs of Iron in aſunder, and to give you an heart to give up your ſoule and body and ſpirit to him, which is a reaſonable ſerving of him, give up minde and judgement and affection to God; and if you finde your hearts ſluggiſh this way, remember on the one ſide, *You will treaſure up wrath againſt the day of wrath*, if you doe not: and if you doe ſo, then Chriſt will come in and *ſuppe with you*, taking in good part, what you performe, and making you a continuall feaſt, *Prov.* 15.15. and others ſhall rejoyce in your behalfe, and this will be a ſupper to you; you ſhall need no more nor better meate, till you goe to your everlaſting long home, having gotten ſuch a ſupper you may then goe to bed when you will, and you ſhall ſleepe moſt ſweetly and comfortably, in another world hee will make his laſt meale with you, when your eyes ſhall cloſe up in ever-

lasting peace, remember this and make use of it for ever.

Vse 2. To teach the servants of Christ that have sometimes supt with him heeretofore, if you have not found Christ, carving out a portion to you of a long time, it is a direction to you as you would have Christ present with you, and his acceptance in al your duties, it behoves you so often as you come before God, come with a boared eare, that every word may sink deep into you; and know that the reason why Christ was not present with you, in publik or in private, was, because you either have not heard or not opened to him, you have not beleived, not confessed your miscariages, not yeelded to God your after-course, and hence you have come to duties, and neither your selves nor others better for them; set therfore open your hearts to Christ, and heare his voyce, and give up your selves to bee wholy taught of God for time to come, and then hee will readily accept you, and will carve you out a blessing out of every ordinance you come to; and you shall finde this verified, hee will keepe a feast with you this night, and the last night you sleepe, shall bee sweet to you, and you shall awake with comfort at the resurrection of the just.

FINIS.

THE SAINTS DELIVERANCE OVT OF TRIbulations.

REV. 7. latter patt of the 14. ver.

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lambe.

FRom the ninth verse of this Chapter you have a description of Gods Church and people that obtained victory and deliverance out of a great danger which lay upon themselves, and the whole Church of God; the judgement and danger is expressed in *verse* 1, 2. Their preservation by the

ſeale of God ſet upon them is expreſt from *verſe* 3. to the 8.

In the ninth verſe you have a deſcription of the perſons preſerved and ſo delivered.

Firſt, as *Iohn* did perceive them to bee by his owne view and hearing, *I beheld*, &c.

Secondly, as hee did learne them to be by the information of one of the Angels. As hee perceived them by his own diſcerning, hee deſcribes them.

1. Firſt, for multitude, a *great multitude*, ſo great as none could number them.

2. Secondly, for their country and the variety of them, *They were of all people and nations and languages.*

3. Thirdly, for their place, *they were before the throne*, which appeares from *verſe* 4. had a place in the Church.

4. Fourthly, he diſcernes them by their habit, *ver.9. cloathed with white robes and palmes in their hands.*

5. Fiftly, He deſcribes them, as he ſees them to be by their imployment, what he heard or ſaw them do, *they cryed out with a loud voyce*, and hee tels you what it was, and how it was confirmed by the teſtimony of all the Angels of God: Their preſervation in evill and deliverance out of inward and outward evils they aſcribe it all to God, *that ſits upon the throne*, and to the *Lambe*. All the while that the judgement lay upon the earth, many of Gods people were carried to this falſe conceit and miſconceiving of God and themſelves,

in aſcribing ſalvation to themſelves, too much reſpect had they to their owne works and merits, but after God had beene pleaſed to waſh them in the blood of his ſonne, they ſaw now that ſalvation from death and ſinne and affliction, was from him that *ſits upon the throne*, and the Temple and from the Lamb, the blood of Chriſt.

This confirmed by all the Angels, *ver.* 11, 12. *They cryed and ſaid, bleſſing and glory and wiſdome, &c. be unto our God for ever.*

And then hee comes to deſcribe them in the Verſe before the Text, and in the Text, hee deſcribes them, by what hee learned of them by information, and that from one of the *Elders* that ſtood by and ſhewed him theſe things.

The *Elder* enquires firſt of him, to prepare him the better to underſtand it: *Knoweſt thou what theſe be? John* returnes an anſwer of his ignorance, and likewiſe an expreſſion of his deſire after information; thou knoweſt and art likely to know it: who then returnes him this anſwer, that they that thus ſtand with enſignes of victory, *Theſe are they which came out of great tribulation, and have waſhed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.*

So then you have in theſe words a deſcription of the eſtate of Gods people by a double argument.

Firſt, by their deliverance out of affliction from great tribulations.

Secondly, by their profiting under affliction, which *have waſhed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lambe.*

Theſe are not a deſcription of the Saints glorified in Heaven, though it bee true of them, but hee ſpeakes heere of the ſervants of God upon Earth, for in the *verſe* following it is ſaid, *They are ſuch as ſerve God day and night in the Temple*, which in Heaven men are not ſaid to doe; there is no Temple there to ſerve God in; but it is ment of the ſervants of God in earth, deſcribed as you heard before.

Theſe two particulars yeeld two doctrines.

Doctrine 1. *The tribulations of Gods people are ſometimes great and deepe, but alwayes ſafe and paſſable.*

Great and deepe, great and deepe tribulations, ſore afflictions they were exerciſed with, but even then ſafe and paſſable. Theſe are they that are come out of their great tribulations, they are preſerved in them, and ſafely delivered out of them, and now they tryumph in the Church of God with the preſence of the Lamb of God, and ſing Pſalmes to his praiſe. It was the earneſt ſupplication of Chriſt our Saviour to his Father, *Mat.* 26.39. *If it be poſſible let this cuppe paſſe from mee*, his earneſt deſire was that the great tribulation he was then entering upon, which cauſed him to ſweate clods of water and blood, and made him cry out, *God had forſaken him*, hee deſires that it might be a paſſable tribulation, that hee might not bee ſwallowed up of it, nor over-whelmed by it, and hee was heard in the thing which hee prayed for, *Hebr.* 5.7. ſo as that this great tribulation, greater then which never any creature ſuffered, this cuppe paſſed from him, it did not o-

ver-whelme

ver-whelme him: And as it was with Christ the head, so it is with all his members, what ever cup the Father mixes for us to drinke, when wee have drunke of it, it passeth from us, it doth not make us drunken as the cuppe given to *Babylon* did, their affliction did so over-whelme them that they were the worse for it ever after; but Gods peoples affliction is passing great, and many (for so the word signifies, *Psal.*34.19.) are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all, be they never so many and great, *yet the Lord delivers them out of them all*, they are all of them safe in the bottome and in the issue, and all of them passable, *Psal.*40.2. *Hee brought me out of the horrible pit, out of the horrible pit of the grave and hell, out of the miery clay, where he could finde no bottome, and set him upon a rocke*, and then hee found a bottome, though there was no bottome at the first to be found to his feeling, yet hee found safety in it and a good issue out of it, *Psal*,71.20. *Thou which hast shewed me great and sore troubles shalt quicken me againe, and shalt bring me againe from the depths of the Earth*: Suppose a man were fallen into deepe afflictions, and lay under great and sore troubles, yet thou wilt revive mee, and lift me up from thence, this God will doe, though the Apostle sometimes say wee are in despaire, hee was troubled out of measure, and had received the sentence of death in it selfe, but hee hath delivered us from so great a death, there is great tribulation, and that brings great death, and great feare

feare of death, which put him to great paine and anguiſh, and yet out of this the Lord delivered him.

You have ſome famous examples in Scripture that ſtand as guides in the way, to give light to them that paſſe by, what great afflictions Gods ſervants have beene in, and yet preſerved in them and delivered out of them: *Daniel* in the Lyons denne, the three children in *Nebuchadnezzars* fiery furnace, *Dan.*3.6. Famous is the ſtory of *Ionah* in the whales belly; ſuch examples as theſe, ſtand as Monuments of this truth, theſe are they which come out of great tribulations: Thus *Ionah* and *Daniel* and others like unto them that have beene in great and ſore dangers, when in the gates of death, and the waves have overwhelmed them in the gulph of deſtruction: yet God hath called them from thence, and lift them up and delivered them. The *Ægyptian* darkeneſſe which Gods people ſuffered in the houſe of bondage: The *Babylonian* captivity in which the people of God were a type of that great captivity, partly of ſinne, which Gods people are ſubject to be drawne too, and partly of bondage, which the Church of God under Antichriſt were likely to endure, they both expreſſe what the Church of God felt; now from all theſe it pleaſed God to redeeme them, and put ſongs of ſalvation into their mouthes, and Palmes of victories into their hands.

Reaſon 1. *Reaſ.*1. From the fellowſhip which Gods people have with Chriſt Jeſus in his death and reſurrection,

rection, that is the first and principall ground, and often shall you reade it, *Col.* 2,10. *Wee are dead and risen with Christ*: If Iesus Christ the *Lamb of God*, if hee die and rise againe from the dead, all his people shall have a time at one time or another to bring them as low as the grave, and yet out of the grave shall they rise againe; for the death and resurrection of Christ is a pledge of a three-fold death and resurrection in us.

First, in that wee are dead in sinne, wee shall rise from that.

Secondly, though dead to the grave, yet wee shall also rise from thence.

Thirdly, dead in afflictions, yet wee shall rise out of them all, none of all those evils that Gods people are subject too, be it sinne or the grave or affliction, and what ever else; by the death of Christ wee die to all these, and by his resurrection, wee rise againe out of them all; there is no evill wee can fall into, but hee that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken us, from sinne, the grave, hell, and from all afflictions: *Timothy* was a yong Souldier of Iesus Christ, and *Paul* that was more beaten to that warfare, when hee encourages him to suffer as a good Souldier, hee bids him remember that *Iesus Christ was risen from the dead*, 2 *Timothy* 2.3,8. Do you thinke it is likely that such a great and eminent servant of God, as *Timothy* was, should forget that Christ was risen againe; why truely wee doe forget it, as often as wee are discouraged with afflictions, but therefore that hee might incourage Christians to looke at all afflictions as dead matter, as

already crucified, looke wee at all tribulations, and doe but remember that Christ was dead and is risen againe, and it will bee a ground for our Faith, when ever wee come into affliction.

Reason 2. *Reason 2.* That (which flowes from hence) and it is taken from that great redemption, which the Lord Iesus by his death and resurrection hath wrought for us. Wee have fellowship with him in his death and resurrection, and from hence comes *plentious redemption*, *Psa.* 130.7,8. so that if there be plentious Redemption in Christ, then though our tribulations be great and plentifull and deepe, yet with the Lord is plentious redemption. *David* comforted himselfe with it, when hee was in deepe affliction, vers. 1. *Out of the deepe I cried.* Deepe affliction, and deepe tribulations, but no tribulation so deepe, but there is redemption as deepe and more plentifull, *Zach.* 9.11. *By the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit in which was no water,* and hee meanes the *Babylonian* captivity, no comfort in it, but by the plentious redemption purchased by the blood of Christ, but therefore wee have comfort.

Reason 3. *Rea.* 3. Taken from our *Baptisme*, which God would have all Christians well acquainted with, it was the first ordinance wee were called unto under the fellowship of the Church, and that which wee had neede to live by all our dayes; for the water doth not onely type the blood of Christ, to wash away the guilt of sinne, nor only the spirit of grace washing away the staine of sinne, but

water

water in baptiſme doth likewiſe figure to us all thoſe afflictions wherewith wee ſhall not onely bee ſprinkled, as ſome are, but ſometimes drenched and dowſed all over, as was the old manner of baptizing; this is that wee doe enter into in our firſt ſolemne *Covenant*, that wee openly make with God in the face of the Congregation; our Fathers made a covenant before us, but this was the firſt on our part, that wee are dipped into *water*, and yet riſe againe out of it, never a whit the worſe, but better. Our Saviour cals *Baptiſme*, *affliction*, *Mat.* 20.22,23. Can you endure to be ſo drenched in the laver of Gods wrath, as I ſhall be; they ſay they are able, but they ſpake they knew not what; but hee anſwered, *you ſhall indeed be baptized*, that is ſprinkled, and he ſeales it, with a *verily*, *verily*, an *Amen*, that as ſure as you have beene baptized into the Family of the Lord Jeſus, and your conſciences ſprinkeled with *the blood of the Lamb*, and the *water* of the Holy Ghoſt, ſo ſure ſhall you bee drenched and dipped in *affliction*, when as the Apoſtle *Peter* had ſpoken of the *deluge* of *water* in *Noahs* time, when but eight Perſons were ſaved, *1 Pet.* 3.20,21. Hee would figure *Baptiſme* thereby, that looke as the ſame *water* that drowned the world, yet lifted up the people of God that were in the *Arke*, truely, ſo it is in this caſe, *afflictions* anſwer our *Baptiſme*, the ſame afflictions that over-whelme the whole Earth, they lift up all that are in Gods *Arke*: All thoſe that are wrapt up in the Covenant of Gods grace and peace, all

the waters of affliction doe but lift them up higher, farre above the higheſt mountaines of the Earth. And it ſhewes us, that wee ſhall bee lift up out of all theſe ſprinklings and afflictions wherewith God hath drenched us to the skinne, and wee ſhall finde a bottome and a *deliverance* in due time.

Reaſon 4. *Rea.* 4. Taken from that which flowes from all this; for God having given us fellowſhip with Chriſt in ſuffering, and wrought redemption for us thereby, and ſealed up unto us aſſurance of preſervation in *affliction* and *deliverance* out of them in our *Baptiſme*; it is meete that hee that promiſed this, ſhould bee preſent with his ſervants to make all this good to them. This reaſon is taken from the *preſence of God* with us in all our afflictions; ſo you reade, *Eſa.* 43. 2. *When thou paſſeſt through the water, I will bee with thee, and in the fire,* &c. which was expreſly verified in the *three children* in the *furnace*, *Behold, I ſee foure, and one of them like the Sonne of God, Dan.* 3. 24, 25. Hee was the fourth that was there preſent with them. And this is that you reade, *Exod.* 3. 2. *The buſh burning and not conſumed*, expreſſed the eſtate of the Church of God at that time, which was all of a *light fire*, they were ſcorched with ſore afflictions, but not conſumed, *becauſe the Angell of the Covenant*, the Lord Ieſus Chriſt, (*ver.* 7.) *was in the buſh*: So that hence it is that the ſervants of God do find ſome kind of ſupportance under their afflictions, in their deepeſt mire.

Vſe 1.

Vſe 1. It is to prevent the diſcouragements of Gods ſervants in time of *affliction*, and to fill our hearts with faith and patience in our worſt times, in the greateſt evils and foreſt *afflictions* that can befall us; in the midſt of them all, fill your hearts with Faith and Patience and conſolation: No diſtreſſe ſo grievous but may befall the beſt of Gods ſervants, and yet no great danger, for there is a rocke in the bottome, upon which wee ſhall ſtand, and there will bee ſafe paſſage out of it, *Thou that haſt ſhewed me great and ſore troubles, thou wilt revive me and liſt me up from the depths of the Earth*: His Faith aſſured him God had led him into the one, and he would alſo leade him into the other. See how hee ſtayes his heart by a lively Faith, *Pſal.*23.4. *Though I walke in the valley of the ſhadow of death, I will feare no evill, becauſe the preſence of God is there, thy rod doth comfort me*; God puts ſome ſtaffe of former experience into our hands whereby hee comforts us. This is that which *Paul* expreſſed of himſelfe in his worſt houres, 2 *Cor.* 1.9,10. When hee had ſpoken of his troubles beyond meaſure, ſaies hee: *All this is that wee might not truſt in the fleſh, but in the living God, who hath and doth and will deliver us*: ſo that afflictions are to draw from us Faith and patience, it is a point Chriſtians are too much ignorant of, when they come into afflictions they thinke no man is ſo afflicted as they are, and ſometimes thereupon call in queſtion, whether they bee *Vſe* 1.

Christians or no; I would only say to such souls, whether were you baptized or no, and if so, was it not into the death of Christ, and were you drowned when you were baptized, were you not rather lifted up; did you not then covenant with God, that whatsoever afflictions you wrastled with and were drenched in; that you would not looke at them as any strange matter; the first day you came into the Church you were baptized, and God made account you should looke for affliction from that day forward, and if they be many and great and sore exercises, the greater and deeper your troubles be, the deeper you drinke of Christs cup, the more sweete will it bee in the bottome; there is something in the bottome will counter-vaile all; you will finde the blood of Christ in the bottome, and the Spirit of grace, and the presence of God there, and if you be dragged to deepe and sore exercises, yet comfort your selves in this, *These are they which come out of great tribulations*, and that will be great grace to you.

Come we now to speake of Gods peoples profiting under afflictions, *They have washed their robes and made them white.*

Doctrine 2. *The people of God that have come off well out of great tribulations, have washed their robes, and made them white with the blood of the Lambe.*

It is plaine in the Text; they tryumph with *Palmes in their hands*, which is first, an *ensigne* of *victory*; and also the *Palme-tree*, the more it is pressed downe with weight, the more it growes;

now

now these that come off gloriously *out of great tribulations*, see how they Triumph, and see how it fares with them, *ver.* 3, 4. *The Angels of God sealed them that they might have no hurt*, and they come off also with glory and renowne and victory.

Robes] you say, were not many of them poore men, poore creatures, that lived in times of darkenesse, in the daies of Popery, and many of them exercised with deepe tribulations; poore men, yes, yet they were adorned with *robes*; had it not beene enough to say, *washed their garments*; what must poore men be set up with *robes*? Yet *robes* they have, and *white robes*, and *they washed in the blood of the Lambe*: So that it shewes you that the servants of God that come wel out of tribulations, they get more *royall spirits* then ever before; for *robes* become royall Persons and Princes; when *robes* in good earnest are put upon any, they put upon them princely Majesty, a spirit of glory and royalty is put upon them; hee carries himselfe no more like a base drudge of this world, hee is able to over-wrastle all tribulations and afflictions of this world, and all the temptations, all the profits and pleasures thereof, hee lookes at them as those things that are but huskes, fit matter for earthly minded men to seeke for; but for his owne part, hee goes on as becomes a Prince: And these endowments of a mans mind they are the apparrell of his soule, when a man hath many royall indowments put upon him, they are princely garments.

But

But why are these called *white robes?* I cannot better expound them then the Lord himselfe doth, *Revel.*19.8. it was given to the Spouse of Christ to be *cloathed with white linnen, pure and cleane, which is the righteousnesse of the Saints,* so that these *white robes are the righteousnesse of the Saints,* the endowments of holinesse and righteousnesse which God puts upon them, and upon every Spouse of his, every poore soule that hee hath bin pleased through his grace to deliver out of deepe tribulations.

Righteousnesse, both imputed from Christ to us, *All that his perfect obedience and patience and righteousnesse ascribed to us is made ours,* 1 *Cor.*1.30. And *righteousnesse of sanctification,* not onely Christs righteousnesse imputed, but the Spirit of grace workes inherent righteousnesse in us; *Faith* and *Patience,* and *Humility* and *Zeale,* and whatever grace accompanies *Salvation;* these be the *royall robes* of *Righteousnesse* God cloaths his servants with, when they come out of afflictions.

Why are they said to be *white robes?*

First, what is it to *wash* their *robes?*

This word *washing,* signifies tribulation like water; tribulations are like mire and water mixed together, in which the people of God are afraid they shall sinke downe, and never can recover, untill they beginne to finde there is the blood of Christ in that water, and finding the power of it, their *garments* that were besmeared with afflictions, are so scoured and rubbed off from their own *righteousnesse,* as that they are glad to depend who-

wholy on the righteouſneſſe of Chriſt: neither doth the garments of Chriſts imputed righteouſneſſe, ſtand in need of *waſhing*, ſave onely the further aſſurance and light of it; but the garments of our Sanctification, the beſt whereof is like *filthy raggs, and menſtruous cloathes*, *Eſa.* 64.6. ſo beſpotted and beſmeared with much filthineſſe; *Faith* mixed with much *doubting*; *Patience* with much *unquietneſſe*; *Humility* with *Pride*; *Zeale* with *coldneſſe*; *Love* with much *hollowneſſe*; yea, our trueſt *Sincerity* with much *Hypocriſie*: So as that Gods people looking at their owne righteouſneſſe, are aſhamed of their beſt gifts, and beſt performances; ſo that this *waſhing* is a cleanſing our this filthineſſe and worldlineſſe and unſavourineſſe, that is found in our beſt righteouſneſſe, the ſpots that were before found in our graces are now *waſhed*, and now wee can be patient and faithfull, and our doubtings are gone; whereas love of God and of the world were mixed together before; now love to the world is gone; *Humility* hath gotten victory over *Pride*; every grace is waſhed by the things wee ſuffer; and this mire is turned into ſope, whereby our corruptions and luſts are *waſhed* away, but yet there will bee ſome ſpots that neede ſcouring off, and therefore hee ſaith, *They made them white*. You may have ſuch *waſhing* and rubbing as gets out the filth and mire, and yet not bee comely, but if together with *waſhing* they become *white*, that is perfect and cleane *waſhing*.

Now they are made *white*, what is that? *White* implies three things.

First, *Purity*, they are made *pure* and cleane, according to that in *Rev.*19.8. *cleane* and *white* are put together, so purely *washed* and scoured, that now he shines *white*, & bright, cleerly *white*, full of purity and brightnes, so as that now there is some kind of pure semblance and lusture in their (graces) their *garments*, not onely foule spots and greater defilements rubbed out, but likewise the graces of God are splendant and bright and cleare without that mixture and drosse that sometimes lay upon them; Faith is pure and cleane from doubting; Love is fervent and shining; Knowledge and wisedome is cleare and bright; Patience and meekenesse now such as becomes and adornes the Gospell of Christ, so as they adorne us, and wee by them adorne our profession; this is to *wash* and make them *white*; our graces, not such as wee and our Brethren are ashamed to own, but such as both they and we rejoyce in.

Secondly, this brightnesse or whitenesse of garments doth not onely shew you their purity and cleaneneſſe, but it likewise shewes their glory and their excellency: when Christ was transfigured, his *rayment* was *white* and bright (*Matth.* 17.2.) so as no colour upon earth was like unto it, it did set forth the glory of Christ, and so all such Christians as are thus *washed* and *whitened*, a spirit of glory, and of God resteth upon them, 1 *Pet.*4. 4. so as they now can *glory in tribulations*, *Rom.*5.2, 3. They are now made more like to the Saints in light,

light, that rejoyce in the presence of God continually.

Thirdly, *White garments* expresse comelinesse of spirit, joyfullnesse of spirit: When *Salomon* would exhort a godly man, whose works are accepted of God to a cheerefull walking with God, *Eccles.9.8.* hee saith, *let thy garments be alwaies white*, implying that a Christian spirit, that hath made a good use of his afflictions, hee hath not onely put upon him a royall spirit, but hath washed away all staines out of his old heart, and now his graces are more pure, and more glorious, and more comfortable, his spirit more cleare and cheerefull.

In the blood of the Lambe] that is in the sufferings of Christ Iesus, when wee have made use of the sufferings of Christ to redeeme us out of those afflictions, the very same blood of Christ that pardoneth our sinne in affliction, doth also heale us therein, and doth also trimme up the spirit to an holy purity and gloriousnesse before God and man.

And this is called *the blood of the Lambe*. Christ is called a *Lambe*, because his is *innocent*, *1 Peter 1.19.* and *patient*, *Esa.53.7.* because he blood is the blood of an innocent and meeke and patient Christ, whence it comes to passe that such as are drenched and *washed* in his blood, rise out of afflictions, not onely *washed* from *spots* and staines, but are growne to such *Meekneße* and *Patience*, and to such purity and cheerfulnesse and glory, as they are now made *white in the blood of the Lamb*.

Reason This comes from hence, it is from the powerfull efficacy of all blessed and sanctified afflictions; and their efficacy is to set all the graces of God a worke, and all the duty of Religion a worke, and by which the blood of Christ is applyed to our soules, and that purifies and glorifies a Christian.

1. See it in particular. First, *Sanctified afflictions* have ever this worke, they first, *humble the soule of a man* before God, *Levit.* 26.41. *If your uncircumcised hearts be humbled, hee will then deliver you out of your afflictions*; this is the nature of all sanctified affliction, it workes Humility: And God *gives grace to the humble*, 1 *Pet.* 5.5.

2. Secondly, *Afflictions set a worke confession of sin*, *Lev.* 26.40. Now what will confession bring? It will likewise bring us grace, 1 *Iohn* 1.9. it will bring us to *cleansing from all unrighteousnesse*, it drives us to examination, and humble confession it besprinkles us with the blood of Christ, and so we are cleansed from all our unrighteousnesse.

3. Thirdly, *They set Faith a worke*; afflictions are called *the tryals of our Faith*, *Iames* 1.3. 1 *Pet.* 1.5. so they put us upon consideration, whence they come, and to what end they come, and *Faith purifies the heart*, *Acts* 15.9. *Eph.* 3.17.

4. Fourthly, *Afflictions quicken the heart of a Christian to prayer*, Zach. 13.9. *They shall call upon me, and I will heare them*: They learne a man to pray, who was never acquainted with prayer before.

5. Fifthly, *Afflictions set patience a worke*, these tryals

tryals bring foorth patience, *Rom.* 5.3,4. and *patience*, let it but have its *perfect worke*, and it will make you entire, wanting nothing, *Iames* 1. 2.

Sixthly, *Afflictions worke obedience*, for they purifie from sinne, and traine us up to bring foorth the peaceable and quiet fruits of Righteousnesse, *Esa.* 27.9. *Hebr.* 12.11. So as now wee grow more awefull in our walkings before God; the sinfull failings that were wont to bee found in our obedience are now taken away. 6.

And righteous duties are now performed with much quietnesse and evennesse; before wee had much adoe to pray, but sanctified afflictions helpe this.

It is 1. an Use of *Tryal*, that any of us may make of our owne afflictions; how many of you have beene exercised with great afflictions; some through anguish of conscience; some with deepe and sore sickenesse, some in body, some in spirit, some in estate; wee may most of us say, O Lord, thou hast shewed us great and sore troubles and yet if a man should now come and aske mee, who are these? We may say, *These are they who have come out of great tribulations* within a while, now God forbid; but would you know whether wee are come fairely off from afflictions or no, that wee bee not bemired; that the filth of our sinnes sticke not still about us, that you may carry *Palmes in your hands*, while you live, and carry them to Heaven with you when you dye: Why you shall know it by this: If God have *Vse*

brought you out of *great tribulations*; well, hee hath taken your old garments from you, and hath put upon you *robes* whatever you were before: If you were to pull a child out of mire, one of your first workes would bee to put other cloathes upon him, God doth so to his servants, and the mire hee turnes into sope, and makes it cleanse us: Whatever frame of spirit you brought into affliction, it will become a *Robe* when you come out of it. Consider therefore what spirit thou hast now, art thou not able to over-looke the world, and all the comforts of it, nor to forbeare the pursute of it for a minute of an houre, why then they are still deceitfull treasures, therefore now gather up a spirit of an higher ranke, thou thoughtest before that the things of this life were great and glorious things; but when the question was, whether you were a live or a dead man; what found you to bee the answer: If you then found the world to bee but unprofitable stuffe, when Gods wrath lyes upon your soule; and have you now a more royall spirit and art able to over-looke all the world, and canst despise thine owne worldlinesse and covetousnesse and all the sinnefull distempers of thy soule, and art able to overcome thy selfe and children and yoake-fellow, or whatever it be, then thou shalt carry a *Palme* for an ensigne of victory in thy hand; but if in this case with the young man you goe away sorrowfull, you will have dirty *robes* put upon you. And further if thou commest faire off, thou wilt finde thy spots taken away,

what

whatever pride or Hypocrisie, unruly affections, wrathfull speeches, it is the nature of affliction, it washes them cleane our, so as they shall bee but little to what they were before; and this blood of Christ will make thee *white*, thou wilt bee adorned with pure and precious graces, with *love* and *Zeale*, &c. and put you into such a frame of grace, as will make your hearts comfortable; sanctified afflictions will make your spirits more cheerefull in a Christian course, and make you bring more glory to God.

To exhort you all in the feare of God to see what God requires of you; if God have delivered you out of affliction, you must now walke as becomes Kings and Princes before God, looke at afflictions as they bee, that they are as sope and nitre to wash you, and know that by affliction you have a royall spirit of grace and glory put upon you: Now therefore suffer not a spot to bee found in any part of thy conversation, before God or man, and now walke on with more cheerefullnesse and freedome of heart in holy duties then ever before; and *wash* thy soule in *the blood* of the innocent *Lambe*, and bee patient and meeke for God under any affliction: Let us be like *Lambs*, dumb under them, and not so much as open our mouthes; but if wee bee as proud as ever, as wrathfull and passionate as ever before; now then how poorely are wee come out of great tribulations. Therefore I charge you in the Name of the Lord Jesus, as ever you looke to finde comfort in a day of tribulation, *Vse 2.*

suffer

ſuffer not your ſelves to be beſpotted, but away with all paſſions and diſtempers that before defiled you, and walke ſo as the name of God, and his Goſpell may bee better ſpoken off by you.

Vſe 3. It is a ground of comfort to all Gods poore ſervants, againſt their greateſt *tribulations*, we know not what troubles and afflictions may come, all of us may bee ſure to meete with *tribulations* in one kinde or other, long it will not bee till wee ſee a change, but bee not troubled at it, if they doe come, bee not diſmaied at them, what ever may or can befall thee; know it is, but ſo much ſope to cleanſe thee, and to make thee *white*, they are but to *waſh* thee from thy filthineſſe, and to make thy ſpirit more comfortable, and the frame of thy carriage more glorious before God and man; and therefore feare not the evils that may befall thee in regard of thy Chriſtian courſe, they will bring thee to ſuch a comfortable frame that Miniſters may ſtand and ſay, who are theſe; Some take theſe *Elders* to bee Miniſters, but I take them to be (as in *Chapter* 4.) common Chriſtians, and *Iohn* is the Miniſter that reveales this to the Church of God: For many times it ſo fals out that a Miniſter in a Congregation doth not know the good that afflictions have wrought in and amongſt ſundry of Gods people: That if a Neighbour ſhould come and aske a Miniſter, what thinke you of ſuch or ſuch an one, it may be that he cannot tell, they have beene *in great tribulations*; but what good is come of it I know not but

but if they bee come out well, ſo as that they are made *white*, this is matter of ſingular comfort, both to Miniſters and Neighbours, and every man ſtands and wonders that afflictions by the mighty power of Gods grace, ſhould meete with ſuch a wonderfull worke as this is, to make ſuch as before were ſtained and polluted and unſavoury are now made *white* and pure and cleane and glorious and gracious; and this is matter of joy and rejoycing both to Miniſters and people, and therefore in this comfort your ſelves. Onely in this be carefull with holy wiſedome in making ſuch a precious uſe of afflictions, yeeld your ſelves and brethren and ſiſters and Miniſters, that comfort who ſhall enquire of you, or bee enquired of concerning you, that you may have come ſo pure and cleane out of afflictions, that you and they, and all that ever may know and heare of you may for ever rejoyce in this Mercy and Goodneſſe of God to you.

FINIS.

FINIS.

GODS MERCIE MANIFEST IN HIS Iustice.

Esay 27. part of the 4. together with the 5. v.

Who would set the bryers and thornes against me in battell, I would goe through them, I would burne them together.

Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with mee.

THese words are part of an heavenly Song, which the Prophet in the name of the Lord, exhorted the people of God to sing unto the Lord, at what time he delivered them out of the hands of their greatest enemies, and when hee under-tooke to preserve his

Church which hee cals his *vineyard*, *verſ.* 2, 3. and will watch over it night and day leaſt any thing ſhould hurt it, becauſe a *vineyard* of *red wine* (which is the beſt wine, *Prov.*23.) becauſe even in the Church of God, among the beſt grapes, and the beſt frame of ſpirit, becauſe among them are found many hypocrites, and ſuch as undermine the peace and welfare of the Church. The Lord manifeſts his mercy thus farre to them, that hee threatens their danger, if they continue in ſuch an eſtate, but promiſes grace and mercy, if they turne from it: looke therefore what hee commanded his people in the Law, *Deut.*20.10. to 13. If they went to make warre with any people, they ſhould firſt offer conditions of peace, before they ſtrike; ſo the Lord himſelfe obſerves the ſame courſe and performes the ſame worke in this place. 1. He doth heere lay ſiege to all the evill members in a vineyard of red-wine, to all the ill members in his Church, *I will burne them together*; a ſore and a greivous threatning unto the hardeſt and moſt obſtinate ſpirit, and beſt mounted and fenced with the ſtrength of their owne reſolutions. But as hee threatens what he will doe in caſe they ſtand out againſt him: So hee alſo offers termes of peace, if they thinke not good to try it out in battell with mee, if they thinke it will bee too hot a ſervice for them, let them then take hold of my ſtrength, if hee ſee it bee a ſafer courſe for him; *Let him make peace with me, and he ſhall be at peace*; even then when hee gives them moſt terrible

terrible threatnings, then hee also offers them gracious termes of peace.

In the words themselves obserue the estate of evill men in the Church of God, even in the *vine-yard of red wine*, in Churches of purest grapes; among them there bee such as are evill. And they are called *bryers* and *thornes*, who will set them in *battell against me?* Which though some understand of vices, yet I choose rather with them, that thinke its meant of vicious and evill persons. For God proclaimes warre, not so much against vices as against persons. Therfore this is the estate and frame of evill men in the Church, *they are as briers and thornes.*

Secondly, Obserue heere the danger of such mens estates, when they doe rise up against God, and set themselves against him in battell, will they set themselves, or set one another? who will undertake it, let me see them face to face, what will be their danger? *I will march through them,* (as it is in the Originall) hee will not hinder his worke, notwithstanding all their opposition, he will goe through them, and further his owne worke.

Thirdly, obserue a redresse or remedy to such, in such a dangerous estate, or an offer of mercy to such, who discerning themselves to bee in such a dangerous estate, doe thinke it more safe for them to take a wiser and better course, to come in to GOD, and to yeeld to him, to take hold of Gods strength, and to be at peace with him.

From theſe words wee may obſerve three ſeverall notes.

Doctrine 1. *Evill men are as bryers and thornes.*

For of theſe hee ſpeakes in this *vine-yard of red wine*; as in a *vine-yard*, unleſſe much heed bee taken, there will bee *bryers* and *thornes* ſpringing in it: So will there bee in the Church of God, evill men will grow up in the Church, in a Vine-yard of red Wine, and God eſteemes them as bryers and thornes, the children of *Belial*, *David* then when hee ſtiles himſelfe, *the ſweete ſinger of Iſrael*, leaſt you ſhould thinke he was in ſome poore frame of ſpirit imbittered againſt ſuch perſons, yet it was in his old-age, when his heart was moſt free, from all diſtemper and paſſion, and gives ſpeciall charge concerning good government; and alſo cals to minde that faithfull and gracious covenant which God hath made with him and his houſe, notwithſtanding his owne and his childrens unworthy walkings, yet 2 *Sam.*23.6,7. hee ſaith, *The ſonnes of Beliall ſhall be all of them as thornes thruſt away, becauſe they cannot be taken with hands, but the man that ſhall touch them muſt be fenced with yron*, &c. ſo *Iſa.*9.18. *Wickednesse burneth as a fire, it ſhall devoure the bryers and thornes*, &c. The ſame perſons, meaning the wicked themſelves. And in *Ezek.*2.6. *Though thou beeſt with bryers and thorns and dwelleſt among Serpents, yet be not diſmaied nor afraid:* So that theſe are the ſtyles which in Scripture are given to wicked men.

Now for the Reaſon. Wherein ſtands the reſemblance

resemblance between *bryers* and *thornes* and evill members of the Church.

First, Looke as you see *bryers* and *thornes* were the fruites of Gods curse upon the ground, *Genesis* 3.17,18. So it is the curse of God upon sinnefull man-kinde, sinnefull Parents, the ground from whence wee are taken, and also the curse of God upon the very Church and Common-wealth and Family, where ever any such live, it is the curse of God upon them, that they yeeld and bring foorth evill men. *Reason* 1.

As you see it is in *Bryers* and *thornes* they are of an intricate and perplexing nature, hanging one within another, and such are wicked men who are knit and joyned together in their confederacies, and perplexing practises against others with whom they live: So the Holy Ghost notes it of wicked men, *Psal.* 3.5. to 8. *I will not bee afraid though ten thousand of people beset themselves round about against me.* So *Esay* 8.9. there is an association, and a confederating themselves together, implying that there is a certaine kinde of intangling, and a drawing one within another, a folding of themselves together, to pull them asunder, you cannot, take men that are inwrapt and intangled within ill company, you may as soone pull one thorne or bryer from another, as pull them asunder one from another; indeed sometimes, if they lie pressed under some hand of God, they will promise to abhorre it and to leave it, but as soone as ever they are but unfettered, and let to their owne length againe, that God allowes but life *Reason* 2.

and

and liberty, they are againe intangled one within another, *Psal.* 2.2. *The Kings of the Earth stand up and take counsell together against the Lord and his annoynted*, broken and pull'd asunder they will not bee, especially if there arise any occasion of dealing against Gods people. And as their confederacies are such, so is their conveyance and wrapping up of businesses, closely and strongly and secretly conveied and folded up, he uttereth his mischievous designe, so they wrap it up, *Mica.* 7.3,4. *The best of them is a bryer, the most upright is sharper then a thorny hedge*: So wise is God in all his dispensations, that when hee comes to visit such bryers and thorns, it will bee when their sinnes are perplexed and folded together, the day of their perplexity shall come as if hee would sute them with a judgement fit for their sinnes, as they have folded and wrapt up their plots against the godly, so as by no meanes they can escape them; so they shall bee folded up in a judgement, such as they shall by no meanes rid themselves of, but shall bee intangled within it.

Reason 3. As in *Bryers* and *Thornes*, there is indeed an use and fruitfullnesse, but it is but a common use, as to serve for the use of Cattle, and so foorth; for no other imployment: So all the use, and the best service that evill men can doe, is to bee fruitfull and helpfull to beasts, to worldly and sinfull men like themselves.

Reason 4. As in *Bryers* and *Thorns*, there is a searching and pricking and stinging nature in them; so as whosoever

ſoever ſhall touch them ſhall bee wounded by them, eſpecially if they bee to deale with the ſervants of God, as the poore Lilly among the Thornes, *Cant.*2.2,3. The poore people of God living among theſe bryers and thornes are expoſed to continual pricking and fretting and galling; thus they do expreſſe themſelvs; therfore the Lord promiſes, *Ezek.* 28.24. that when his Church and people ſhall bee freed and delivered from their evill Neighbours, then *Tirus* and *Sydon* ſhall bee no more a pricking *Bryer*, nor a *piercing Thorne* to the houſe of *Iſrael*.

As Bryers and Thornes, the beſt uſe that is commonly made of them, is but to hedge and fence in: So many times it ſo fals out, that God makes uſe of theſe bryers and thornes for the benefit of his ſervants, ſo as that they are kept in a marvellous innocent frame to what elſe they would bee, if they were not well fenced in, but lay open, they would wander and ſtraggle abroad, as Cattle doe out of unfenced paſtours; truely ſo is this caſe; God doth make ſuch uſe even of all the evill neighbours of his Church, as that hee doth fence in his Church with them, leaſt they ſhould runne awry, *Hoſea* 2.6. *Therefore behold I will hedge up thy way with thornes, and make a wall that ſhee ſhall not finde his paths, they ſhall be galled if they turne aſide to the right hand or to the left*, but God by this means, hedges and fences them in. *Reaſon* 5.

Laſtly, Beſides their perplexity in this life, you reade this likewiſe to bee the end of them, 6.

that which brings foorth bryers and thornes is neare unto curſing, whoſe end is to bee burned, *Hebr.6.8.* they are in the end to bee ſtub'd up and dried, and ſo made fit fewell for the fire, *2 Sam.23.6.* they ſhall bee burnt together, and ſuch is the end of all wicked and ungodly men, without they make their peace, *they ſhall be burnt*, as it is here in the Text.

Vſe It may ſerve to diſcover unto evill men that unworthy frame of ſpirit that is in them, they are not onely unprofitable in themſelves, but prejudiciall likewiſe to their neighbours; ſee how moſt unworthy of all the trees of the Field, they are neither fruitfull nor ſerviceable for building, as Oakes and Cedars are, but to bee onely bryers and thornes, which of all other ſhrubbs are the moſt accurſed trees. A man ſhould therfore moſt of all bleſſe himſelfe from ſuch a frame, though wee ſhould not bee fruitfull in the places where wee live, yet ſome good ſervice wee may doe, Oakes yeeld ſmall fruite, and as little doth the Cedar, but yet they are both harmeleſſe and uſefull, but theſe bryers and thornes bring foorth no fruit, if any, it is but for beaſts, and they are of no uſe, but to hedge in Gods people, and to pricke and gall them if they runne from God; now what a moſt uncomfortable condition is it to bee borne and brought up a childe of Gods curſe: There is a profitable uſe of bryers and thornes, but they were to grow onely in hedge-rowes, this is a fruite of the curſe, that they grow in the midſt of fields and paſtures, for in all the Paradiſe

of

of God was nothing that did hurt, but when once the Earth growes accurſed, it brings foorth bryers and thornes, in the beſt ſoyles, in the midſt of Fields and Meddowes: So that then this is a curſed condition, there to ſtand and grow, where a man ſhall, and is apt to choake the beſt ſeedes that is ſowne, and hinder them that elſe would be comming on to Religion, there to live where hee will bee prickes in the eyes of them whom hee converſes withall; this is a frame of ſpirit; however men may pleaſe themſelves in it, that they can gall and ſting poore Chriſtians, but doe you conſider that while you ſoe doe ſting and vexe and fret the hearts of your Neighbours, is not this the worke of bryers and thorns, you are a curſe to theſe Churches and Commonwealthes and families where you dwell; this is a fearefull condition that a man ſhould expoſe himſelfe to be a child of the curſe.

When evill men doe ſet themſelves againſt God, they doe not hinder Gods work, but haſten their owne burning, their owne ruine. Doctrine 2.

Who will ſet themſelves againſt me in battle: If they ſet themſelves or one another againſt mee, ſhall Gods worke bee hindered? No, I will keepe my pace, ſo the word ſignifies, as ſouldiers, I will pace or march through them, not onely hee will doe that which is good in his owne eyes, notwithſtanding all their oppoſition, but I will march an end, his ſervants ſhall not onely carry an end their courſe, but march, not retire diſorderly, nor fly away as men routed

and diſheartened, as turning backe, giving ground, or yeelding to the oppoſition brought againſt them, but *I will goe through them*, that is to ſay they by ſtanding in the way ſhall not hinder me, but what I meane to doe, and what my ſervants are to doe, they ſhall doe it, they ſhall goe through with an even pace, and not turne aſide to either hand. Gods worke ſhall not bee hindered; What then? *But I will burne them up together*, that is to ſay, when their confederacies are moſt ſtrongly combined, and cloſelieſt compacted, and begins to prevaile with moſt ſtrength, then God will beginne to ſet a fire among them, and this will bee the iſſue of it, when God beginnes to burne and begins to ceaze upon any one mans conſcience and burnes that, and fals upon his eſtate, and weakens that, and caſts a fire into a mans tabernacle, and waſtes the fruite of his body, and blaſts the endeavours and workes of his hands; ſo hee ſets him all a fire, and hee will burne them up together, when the fire is once kindled, it will not ceaſe till it have burned them all up; when a man hardens himſelfe againſt God, and againſt the good counſell of Gods ſervants, when God begins with him hee will kindle a fire, that ſhall not goe out till all bee conſumed. There was a conſpiracy among the *Sodomites* againſt *Lot*, *Geneſis* 19.9. *Wee will deale worſe with thee then with them, and they preſſed upon him,* ver. 11. *And the Angels plucking him in, they ſtrucke all them, and it was a cloudy*

cloudy mist to them, they were all strucke blinde, and what was the issue of it? Why, *vers.* 24. *The Lord rained fire and brimstone upon them, and destroyed them all*, They rise up against God, against his Angels and servants, and professed they would doe it, then God strikes them; first, with blindnesse, a faire warning, and if that will not serve the turne, hee will burne them up together, foure Cities of them in one day, and God set them foorth as an example of his vengeance to all them that shall come to the like wickednesse: If therefore any shall set themselves against God and his servants, and make battle against him, hee will goe on with his worke in his servants, but them hee will destroy and burne up together; there is no man that lives in an estate of nature, but is in a cursed estate.

Reason, My true intent is to speak to this point, how men in a carnall frame of spirit, have intangled themselves in sinne, and thereby warring against God doe thereby draw themselves from the fellowship of Gods grace, I would heerein shew you the counsell of the Holy Ghost; that when Gods protection and blessing is upon his Church, hee would have no man live in his Church but bee better for it; for God saith, *Fury is not in mee*, tell not mee of bryers and thornes, if men will bee such then they shall bee burned together; but yet this hee saith, his intent is to keepe his vine-yard pure and free from these evills, but if they will have

peace, let them take hold of my ſtrength, and they ſhall have peace.

Reaſon 1. Taken from the juſt indignation that God doth conceive againſt all evill men, when they doe harden their hearts againſt him; if a man bee borne in a curſed eſtate, and allow himſelfe therein, and ſo fall ſhort of the grace of God, God takes this as a juſt matter and cauſe of provocation, *Ier.7.19. Doe they provoke me to anger, and not themſelves to the confuſion of their owne faces. Never did any waxe fierce againſt God and proſper, Iob 9.4. Eſa.45.9. Woe to him that ſtrives with his Maker*, God takes it as a matter of great indignation, when men reſolve to live and die in an eſtate of nature.

Reaſon 2. It is taken from the power put upon the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; God hath ſet him up on the *holy hill of Sion, and hee hath given him the Heathens for his poſſeſſion, and a rod of yron, whereby hee rules in the midſt of his enemies, Pſalm.2.8,9. Pſalm.110.2.* Whence it is that there is a wall of fire round about the Church, whereby ſuch as greeve him ſhall bee burnt up together.

Reaſon 3. From the eſtate and condition of Gods people, when God undertakes the protection of his Church, hee deſcribes his Church to bee a burthenſome ſtone, *Zachary* 12.2. men ſhall cut their hand with it, and *ver.3. Hierusalem ſhall bee as a torch in a ſheafe, verſe 6.* and like a fire among wood, and all the people that come againſt it ſhall bee as dry ſtubble; and hee

will

will make *Hierusalem* as a cup of poyson or astonishment, so as whosoever comes against *Hierusalem*, if hee either refresh himselfe with doing evill to the Church of God, or profit himselfe by it; it shall bee a cup of poyson to him, so as a man cannot hurt the Church, but it will make him to runne madde, which shewes what hot service it is for men to take up any evill against the Church of God, he doth not hinder Gods worke, but hasten his owne ruine.

It may serve for a ground of strong consolation to all the servants of God that do bring foorth red wine, well relished, not wilde and unsavoury grapes, carnall fruits of the flesh; if sweete and savoury to God and our brethren, here is a promise of his protection to them, nothing shall hurt them, and if bryers and thornes rise up against them, yet hee will goe through them with his work, and he will burne up all their enemies together: So that when men live in places where they are ready enough to pricke and gall, and scratch at the life and liberty of Gods servants; yet feare not; there are more with us then against us. *Vse* 1.

I saith a Christian, I should never feare the opposition of the sons of men, but heere is my feare and danger, my owne unworthy base heart is ready to start aside from God, and to dishonour him and the wayes of his truth and grace, and I am apt to walke unworthily, how shall I doe in such a case?

Why heere is thy direction and consolation in such

ſuch a caſe, God hath promiſed that hee will march through with his worke, if God give us an heart to ſubmit to his colours, and bring foorth fruites that himſelfe reliſheth, then this will follow, God will never retire diſhonourably to himſelfe and his children, however they may be ſcattered, yet he will march an end, not only in his owne providence, in ſtill mainetaining and keeping his Church for good; but as hee himſelfe will looke to his owne, ſo hee will march an end in his ſervants, he will breath in them by his Spirit of wiſedome and power, that what ever comes upon them, they will keepe Faith and a good conſcience, according to all the truth and goodneſſe God hath manifeſted to them, they will march in his ſtrength, and he will keep them that they ſhall not retire diſorderly.

And ſo it is a Uſe of Direction to admoniſh us in the feare of God to take heede (as ever wee deſire God ſhould keep us ſafe from the workers of iniquities) according to the verſe before the Text, take heede wee bring not foorth wilde grapes, much leſſe bitter grapes, fruites of the world, and of the fleſh, and of the pride of our owne hearts; but bee ſure wee bring foorth good fruites to God, and not onely good, but in ſome kinde generous, of the beſt ſpirits. *Iudah* is deſcribed by the redneſſe of his eyes, *Gen.* 49. alluding to that excellent life and ſpirit that ſhould be in him: the red wine is the moſt generous, ſo Chriſtians ſhould not onely bring foorth good fruite, ſuch as hath lawfull warrant from the word

word, and within bounds of calling, but ſuch as hath in it ſome meaſure of life and ſpirit and power of grace breathing foorth in it, and if at any time wee bee ſtraightned, as many times we come off with much flatneſſe in duties; wee then complaine off, and bewaile ſuch evils before God, and reſt not till God againe renew us and inlarge us, that ſo God may defend us; or if any proſper againſt us, wee may either bee preſerved ſecure therein, or if I muſt and doe retire, then that wee may come off fairely, that God may not bee diſhonoured, nor any evill report be raiſed againſt the Goſpell, by reaſon of any ill walking of ours; ſee that there bee life and ſpirit in your walkings before God in both your particular and generall calling; and then if God tranſplant us hee will march before us, and wee in his ſtrength ſhall goe through any intanglements without being inſnared, its a world to ſee the perplexities of ſome mens conſciences, who have ill carried a buſineſſe, and defiled themſelves in it, but if the Lord keepe us ſpotleſſe, and our conſciences void of offence, that wee walke evenly with him, according to his truth and goodneſſe, that whatever exerciſe God puts us too; yea, if hee remoove our vine-yard, it will not make us barren, but more generous, and fruitefull, wee ſhall carry our roote with us, and bee ſet in another place and our fruite will bee more ſweet and ſavoury.

Now for the laſt part of the Text, it is a direction to all that are not able to make this

good to their ſouls, that they bring not forth good cluſters to refreſh both God and man; if wee bee not fallen into malicious oppoſition, obſerve we this point,

Doctrine 3. *That ſuch as doe take hold of Gods ſtrength and make peace with him though their condition, were never ſo bad and miſchievous againſt God and his Church, yet if they take hold of Gods ſtrength, they may make peace with him, they ſhall have peace.*

Though they bee *bryers* and *thornes*, and bring foorth curſed fruites of curſed ground, that never did good to any but beaſts; ſuppoſe your caſe were ſo, that you never did good in your place, but have grieved all the good ones about you in Church and Family, that every one have fared the worſe for you, which is a fearefull condition; but were it ſo and though perplexed in ill company and cannot get rid of them, yet behold heere God makes a fair offer to you, ſtand not upon your owne defence againſt him, but take hold of his ſtrength, and make your peace with him, and you ſhall bee at peace: Now this is wonderfull mercy; did you ever read of a promiſe to bryers and thorns, not only weeds, but noyſome, ſtinking weeds, yet if they think good to eſcape burning, let them take a ſafer courſe, and they ſhall bee accepted.

Reaſon. Why God ſo graciouſly offers himſelfe to ſuch and gives them leave to lay hold on him?

1. Firſt, Taken from the glory of his owne name, when God ſhall bee pleaſed to pardon and heale ſuch ſinners, it magnifies the glory of the rich grace

grace of God, *Who is a God like unto thee? Mica.* 7.18. Whenever God shewes mercy to bryers and thornes, such as have pricked and pierced Gods people, no man that sees it, but will have cause to wonder and stand amazed at the riches of Gods mercy to them: Who is a God like unto thee that subduest, that treadest downe our high thoughts and imaginations? Who is a God like unto thee that subduest such and healest such sins as these bee? This God will doe instead of *thornes shall grow the Mirtle tree, Esay* 55.13. that this may be for a name never to be forgotten, that hee might gaine a name to religion, and make it famous and glorious; this shall bee to the Lord for a name, to his Church and to such Christians for a name, as are thus transformed from bryers and thornes, a name to the glory of his grace, and the power of his ordinances, it shall stand for an everlasting remembrance never to bee forgotten, it shall stand for a monument of his mighty power of the mighty power of God; this shall stand for a Trophy of glorious victory: And such an ensigne was *Paul, Gal.* 1.23. when they heard that *Paul*, sometimes a *Persecutor*, and now preached the Faith, they glorified God in me: When hee was a pricking bryer to the house of *Israel*, Christ meetes him in the way, and makes him glad to lay hold on his strength, and thereupon hee becomes a tall and eminent and straight tree in the garden of God, and the Church glorified God for him.

It is expressed in the first words of the Text, taken *Reason* 2.

ken from the readineſſe of God to lay downe his fury, when men lay aſide their ſinnes, and God plants a vine-yard of red wine, the Lord will water it, and nothing ſhall hurt it, and fury is not in mee, neither againſt his Church, nor the bryers and thornes, if they will lay downe armes againſt mee: If they will fight it out then I will burn them up, but if they will be ſaved, let them come and take hold of my ſtrength, and they ſhall ſee that fury is not in mee; but let bryers come and make peace with me, and they ſhall find no backwardneſſe in me.

Vſe 1. Serves to give counſell and exhortation to every ſoule, whoſe grapes are not yet ſweete, that bring foorth fruites to ſinne, and are not able to ſay, God hath filled their hearts with generous liquour of ſavoury grace: Every Chriſtian duty is without life, if wee bring foorth either bitter or flat fruites, heere is the charge and counſell given to you, to ſtand out no longer againſt God, but in the name of God take hold of his ſtrength, that you may make peace with him, but if you ſtill ſtand out and bring foorth no fruite to God: conſider of it if you will ſtand out againſt God, and will bee hurtfull and prejudicious in your places, yee ſhall bee confounded, hee will march forward and conſume you roote and branch, but let a man take hold of Gods ſtrength and make peace with him.

But you may ſay, how may I come to doe it, my fruites are flat and dead, and doe nothing but for faſhion ſake. I am conſcious to my ſelfe of

many evil offices I have done, wherby I have bin an occasion of hindering others in well-doing; but how shall I now do to lay hold on Gods strength.

First, If you would lay hold on Gods strength then lay downe all your owne weapons, all weapons of hostility against God, doe not onely lay aside opposition against Gods Church, but whatever sinnefull frame of heart or life thou hast in thy heart or way, cast it from thee, and have no more to doe with it, *Esay* 55.6,7,8. lay aside all wicked imaginations and sinnefull lusts, allow not your selves in any sinne, hee that allowes himselfe in any sinne, hee fights against God: and therefore away with all hostility, and then God will abundantly bee ready to forgive and pardon thee; if wee would have God to pardon sinne, it is for us to leave sinne; as long as we retain it, God never remits it, but when they shall forsake their evill wayes, then I will heale their rebellions, and my anger is turned from them. 1.

Secondly, we are to lay down all confidence in our owne goodnesse, for if so bee that God see wee put trust in our owne strength, in any gift wee have received, wee shall be but weake creatures, and shall still walke doubtfully of our condition: but if wee desire to finde peace sealed up to our hearts, in such a case wee must have no confidence in the flesh, *Phil.*3.2,3,4. *Wee have no confidence in the flesh, and count all losse that I may lay hold on* Christ; a man must lay downe all confidence in his owne good nesse and education, and in all ordinances: *Paul* relinquishes 2.

all as that which had not set his heart through with God, *Ephesians* 6.10.

Thirdly, To beleeve on the mercy of God, as his great power and strength; if hee shall be good to such as wee are, this is to lay hold on Gods strength, when *Moses* makes intercession for such men, hee would have them to lay hold on Gods strength, and fitly explaines this Phrase in hand, *Numb.* 14.17. *Let the power of my Lord bee great, the mercy of the Lord is great:* The great power of God is shewed in making good this word of the forgiving the iniquities of his people; so that when a soule takes hold of Gods strength, hee lookes at it as a matter of Gods great power, that hee should ever shew mercy to such an one as he was, that ever hee should forgive such sinnes, and subdue such iniquities, this is to lay hold on Gods strength: Let men come and see and know that God must put foorth mighty power and strength, if ever hee shew mercy to such wretches as wee are: As long as a man lookes at sinne as a small matter, and makes account God hath pardoned as great sinnes as his, and if hee deferre his Repentance, the Lord have mercy will serve his turne, this is not to lay hold on Gods strength, and so long a man makes himselfe uncapable of such a mercy, but when a man sees and knowes hee stands in neede of the great power of God in forgiving and pardoning him, that God shall never forgive such sinnes as his, unlesse *in the multitude of his mercies he put away his iniquities*, as long as a man thinkes that a small matter will

serve

serve the turne, its a signe hee sees not his sinne to bee out of measure sinfull; but when a man sees hee stands in neede of the treasures of grace, treasures of patience, powerfull and great mercy to pardon such great and crying sinnes as his is, then hee takes hold of Gods strength.

Fourthly, Let a man lay hold on Gods strength not onely by Faith, but lay hold of him in prayer and in Gods promises and in all the word of God, and in his attributes and presse God with the greatnesse of his power, and of his promise, and the riches of his grace in pardoning such sinnes as his, and then, saith God in such a case, *let mee alone*, as if *Moses* had layed hands on the power, *Exod.* 32. When the soule holds out with constant longings after God, and will not let him goe till it finde some hope of pardon then it doth lay hold on Gods strength.

Vse 3. It may serve to exhort and stirre up every soule that knowes his heart and life is unprofitable and never brought foorth any sweet or savoury fruites to God to this day, to see now what God calls it too: as ever wee desire to bee free from everlasting burnings (as who is there that can dwell in everlasting burnings, *Esa.* 33. last) as ever you desire your soules might finde peace with God, and to enjoy the benefit of the gracious offer, which God now tenders to you; so now lay hold of Gods strength, lay down your quarrels against the ordinances, and all the sinnefull lusts that you have addicted your selves too; as Pride and Hypocrisie, and whatever wee have displeased God with

with, forsake your imaginations, even your secretest thoughts, and put no confidence in whatever courses you will take, and put not of God, till you come to this or that age, or to this sickenesse, or till you bee marryed, and have provided your children such and such portions; and presume of your owne strength and wisedome, this will deceive you; but if you can bring your hearts to this, that if ever God do shew mercy to you, it must not bee a crumme, but a bottomelesse depth of mercy, multitudes of great mercies, *Psal.* 51. Let it appeare that it is power of mercy and rich grace to you that ever you may have your sinnes pardoned, take hold of it, and looke at it as a strong mercy that you must have and lay hold by a strong hand of Faith, and by strong prayers and cryes, and sighes and groanes, and a constant pursute after him in every ordinance of his; seeke God earnestly and constantly, *And so shall you finde him speaking peace* and pardon to you, according to this promise here in the Text.

FINIS.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE WICKEDS CRAFT TO INSNARE GODS People described.

MATTH. 16. 1,2,3.

The Phariſes with the Sadduces came and tempting him, deſired him that he would ſhew them a ſigne from Heaven, &c.

AFter thoſe Parabolicall ſpeeches which are ſet downe in in the fore-going Chapter of the *Syrofenitian* woman, the next Parable which followes, wherby our Saviour ſets foorth by ſimilitude his Doctrine to the people is this. The *Phariſes* and *Sadduces* come to tempt him, and deſire a ſigne

and a signe from Heaven; our Saviour answers them according to their question, hee reproves both them and their Question, and shewes the ground of it.

It may seeme by the dependance of this Chapter upon the former, that the *Pharisees* and *Sadduces* came to our Saviour to demand a *signe from Heaven*, before hee had fed the people in the end of the former Chapter, where he fed foure thousands of them with seven loaves and a few fishes, a miracle that filled the mouthes of them all with much rumour round about the country, and the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were not a little exercised therewith, they thereupon to dazell the glory of this great worke of God, come to him, desiring him not to put them off with such earthly signes as he had now done, in multiplying earthly loavs, but to *shew them a signe from Heaven*, that they might see and beleeve; I guesse this to bee the occasion of the discourse, not onely, because this miracle was described immediately before: but because upon occasion of the like miracle, they came to him in like sort, and demanded the like signe, *Iohn* 10.6. to 13. & 30,31.

Now in the words read wee have to observe two parts.

1. First, The demand of a signe, *a signe from Heaven.*

2. Secondly, Our Saviours rejection of this demand.

1. In the demand of a signe, observe the efficients or causers of it, *Pharisees* and *Sadduces.*

2. The

2. The end for which they did desire it, and that was to tempt him.

Now in our Saviours rejection of this demand you have two things considerable.

First, The reproofe hee gives them, and their persons: *O you hypocrites.*

Secondly, Observe the ground of his reproof of them, and that is a conviction of their readinesse to beleeve more uncertaine things upon lesse credible ground, then they would beleeve him to be the *Messiah* sent of God, upon most certaine and evident grounds, and this he shewes them by instancing in naturall things. *If the evening bee red and bright, yee say to morrow will be faire weather, and it many times so fals out; can yee discerne the face of the skie,* by such probabilities as these bee, and can yee not discerne the estate of the times from all the Prophesies from Heaven, and all that assistance that you see in these works.

A note or two from the words, and first as they may be taken from those that demand these signs, *the Pharisees and Sadduces.*

Wicked men though enemies one to another, of never so contrary mindes, yea and contrary religions, yet can tell how to combine and agree together to oppose the truth and to undermine it. Doctrine 1.

These *Pharisees* and *Sadduces*, they were men of contrary mindes, of contrary Judgements and Religions and Professions, and could not suite by any meanes in ordinary course one with another, for so wee reade of this difference betweene them.

First, The *Pharisees* they did not onely receive the Law, but did adde to it sundry traditions of their owne, as *Josephus* reports. These *Sadduces* thought it arrogancy in the *Pharisees* to put upon the Church, traditions of their owne, which they renounced, and they did not onely renounce their traditions, but rested only in the five Books of *Moses*: Whence it is observable by the learned, when the *Sadduces* came and tempted Christ about the resurrection, (which they deny, *Matth.*20.22,23.) Christ to convince them of the point of resurrection, he fetches a testimony, not out of the Prophets, because hee thought they would not submit to it, but out of the Books of *Moses*; *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*

A second difference the Apostle *Paul* makes mention of, *Acts* 23.8. *The Sadduces say, there is neither Resurrection, nor Angels, nor spirits, but the Pharisees confesse both*: Both what? both the Resurrection of the bodies, and likewise the immortality of spirits; and not of mens spirits onely, but of Angels: And yet notwithstanding wee must not looke at these *Sadduces* as Epicures, though it be the next way to bring in Epicurisme; for if there bee no spirits nor immortality, then they may commit any wickednes; but though they did deny the Resurrection of the body, and the immortality of the soule, yet they did not deny the providence of God as Epicures doe.

Another difference is also noted that the *Pharisees* were more gracious with the people, found greater

greater applause, and greater respect, as being accounted more holy men, *Gal.*1. the strict sect of the Religion of the *Pharisees*: but the *Sadduces* though lesse gracious with the people, yet prevailed more in the Court among great men; for great men love not strictnesse, but rather to take more liberty, and therefore it is that wee shall sometimes finde, the leaven of the *Sadduces* and of *Herod*, or of the *Herodians* put together, *Mat.* 16.6. *Mark* 8.17. They had a conceit there was neither reward nor punishment in another world. Thus they were of such contrary Religions, that they could not stand one with another; but if it come to under-mine the truth and to tempt our Saviour then they both agree together. The same you shall reade practized in *Matth.*22.15,16. *The Pharisees and the Herodians came to tempt him, saying, Is it lawfull to give tribute to Cæsar or not?* These *Herodians* did presse upon the Jewish Common-wealth *Cæsars* governement, and the *Pharisees*, thought it not meet to submit to a forraigne jurisdiction, they did not favour it: yet though these *Herodians* were every way contrary to the *Pharisees*, they agreed both upon this point, *to tempt him*; so *Luke* 23.7. to 12. *Herod* and *Pilate* had beene at enmity a great while; and when *Pilate* saw hee belonged to *Herods* jurisdiction, hee sent him to him, and the same day *Pilate* and *Herod* were made friends; when it comes to the matter of crucifying Christ, then *Herod* and the Jewes and the *Roman* souldiers can conspire together to put disgrace upon Christ.

You have something suteable to both these, *Rev.* 16.13,14. *There were three unclean spirits like froggs came out of the mouth of the Dragon, and the beast and the false Prophet, and they are the spirits of Divels, which goe foorth to the Kings of the earth to gather them to the battell of the great day of God Almighty.* The *Dragon* is the *Turke*, and the *Beast* and *false Prophet* is the *Pope* and his crue: Now though these bee of such contrary Religions, that you would not thinke it possible that they should joyne their forces together; yet so the matter will come to passe that the factors of the one shall consult with the other, and both of them joyne with all the Princes of the world, at least the great Lords of the world, and draw them altogether to the battell of the great day of the Lords, when with one consent they shall fight against, not onely the Iewes that shall rise against the *Dragon* of *Constantinople*; but against those Christians that shall arise against the *Beast of Rome*, and so shall joyne their strength to rise up against the Lord Iesus Christ: so that this is no new matter in the world.

Reason 1. Taken from the strong and greatest opposition that is found betweene all truth and false-hood then that which is found betweene any false-hood in the world; there is a farre stronger opposition betweene light and darkenesse, then can bee found betweene one darkenesse and another: There is some blush of blackenesse in all darkenesse; now there is no such dispropportion betweene the grounds, and ends and rules

rules of the Pope and Turke, as betweene them both; and our Christian Religion, if once it appeare, as now for some yeares it hath done, that the grounds of Popish Religion, and the end they ayme at is worldly and carnall, at their owne wealth and usurpation; and if for that end they make use of the word of God, and can make use of their traditions to bee of equall vallew with the Scriptures: Grant them that, and it will bee no hard matter to conceive, that when Christians shall startle that Beast, and the Jewes fall upon the Turke, that when the Pope sees hee cannot maintaine Head against Christian Princes, nor the Turke against the Iewes; they will conceive yet, the Bishop of *Rome* may maintaine his owne strength and authority, and rule over such Princes, by his Canons and Decrees, and so will joyne together against the Gospell of Christ, and all that professe the truth of his Name.

It is taken from the wisedome of Satan, who *Reason* 2. though hee can tell how to make his owne advantage out of the enemies of contrary factions and errours, one against another, yet when they both come to bee opposed with the truth of the Gospell; it will not stand with his wisedome to maineteine any longer such factions in opposition one to another, being opposed to Christian Religion: It is true, as long as factions and errours are flashing one against another, Satan knowes how to advantage himselfe by their contestations and tumults and warrs one with another,

ther, to multiply confusion and disorder, and diffusion of Christian bloud; in this respect the wicked spirit of darkenesse fats himself in his course, and fills the gates of hell and of death: but now in case the Christian truth come to oppose such kinde of errours as are at difference one with another, it will not now stand with Satans wisdome to suffer further continuance of dissention among those of the other side; but hee will then bend the wits of all the subtile creatures hee hath to take paines with the cheefe on both sides, to lay downe their weapons one against another, and to sheath their swords in the sides of a common adversary. No wonder to see sometime *France* or *Spaine* at sharpe warrs: Let them fight, for it hinders not his kingdome, that his owne Subjects should fall out one with another, so it bee any thing whereby God is most dishonoured: but if that Christian Protestants, resist and oppose the Catholike religion, and seeke to roote it out; in such a case you shall not neede to expect a strong opposition of him, and all his instruments; and all the three Nations plotting together, and joyne heart and hand, that with one consent they might fight against the Protestant Princes; and this our Saviour touches upon, *Every Kingdome devided against it selfe cannot stand, Mat.*12.25,26. and his reason is right; for though sometime one spirit will cast out another; and a good witch (as they call them) will heale what a bad witch doth, or one spirit is too hard for another; yet the truth is our Saviours

ours reaſon ſtands firme, where there is ſoe much pride, there cannot but bee much contention, but if Chriſt come and oppoſe theſe ſpirits, and if hee will caſt our Divels, Satan cannot hinder him: If Chriſt ſhould caſt out Divels in the name of *Belzebub*, that's no hinderance to Satans kingdome, but if Chriſt caſt out Divels in his owne name, then its time for Satan to ſtirre, and therefore now *his kingdome cannot ſtand:* and ſo you ſee the truth of the Point.

Obiect. If this bee true that men of contrary Iudgements, can tell how to fawder themſelves together againſt the truth; how then came it to paſſe that *Paul* fell upon ſuch a ſtratagem as he did in *Act.*23.6.to 10. perceiving one part was *Sadduces*, and the other part *Phariſees*, the very ſame perſons in the Text; hee thought that by this breach betweene them in their judgements, he ſhould creepe out of the ſnare, and therefore in heavenly wiſedome, hee takes the advantage of it, *I am a Phariſee*, (ſaith hee) *and the ſonne of a Phariſee, and when the Scribes, that were of the Phariſees part heard him ſay ſo, they beginne to contend for Paul againſt the Sadduces*, and come out with a divine ſpeech, *we finde no fault in this man*; if an *Angell* or a ſpirit, that was wont to ſpeake in any of the Prophets have ſaid any thing to this man; let us not fight againſt him, and then *Paul* was ſafe enough; now if a Chriſtian

man may make such an advantage by that meanes to escape the enmity of them both; how came it to passe, that both these sects did not consent with one consent against *Paul*?

Answ. *Paul* had put the case unto them in such termes, as that hee comes not upon them with any Christian truth, he conceales his opinion of any Christian truth at that time, which was opposite to them both, but onely names that which was onely peculiar to one of these sects; *Paul* doth not say, hee was accused for that hee was a Christian, for such a word would have combined them all together against him; but hee professes he was of one of these sects bred, and therfore they might imagine hee was wholly on their side, and they knew hee was a *Pharisee*, and imagined there was no great difference betweene him now, and what hee was before, and so they shelter him, and the *Sadduces* of the two were the fiercer opposers of Religion: they were sometimes full of indignation, *Act.* 5.17. *They raged against Peter and John*, now therefore *Paul* tooke the best course, hee would escape their hands that were the most cruell, though the other were nought, yet of the two they were the better.

But you say, doth this become a sincere hearted Christian to say, hee is of the profession of the *Pharisees*, which is such as unles a man beleeve and practise better, hee shall never come to Heaven, *Matth.* 5.20. when hee

knowes they are men that our Saviour had condemned for Hypocrites, and went up and downe to make proselites to themselves: would hee now professe himselfe to bee an Hypocrite, a traditioner, to bee a man that *under pretence of long prayers, devoure widdowes houses*, would hee professe himselfe to be of that sect that was ever ready to carpe at our Saviour, would he ranke himselfe among them?

I confesse, it is that which troubles Interpreters, how to excuse *Paul* in this case, to professe himselfe to bee a *Pharisee* in the open Congregation, a great multitude, and before them all, to professe himselfe a *Pharisee:* When as all the world knew, where ever hee came, hee beate downe the whole sect of the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*, and all their Doctrines and practises.

Answ. Had hee spoken in such an audience where he might have encouraged any man weake in judgement, the rather to have cleaved to the sect of the *Pharisees*, that they and their children might become *Pharisees* by his example, it could not then bee excused; but *Paul* knew where hee was; the people that was there, was either such good Christians as well knew his spirit, or such as were desperate enemies against Christ and his grace, the true Christians would take no offence, but would understand his meaning, and for his enemies, he knew he should dash them one against another, and that by that meanes hee should escape, and therefore hee onely instances in such

parts of *Pharisees*, as in which they did professe the truth; for the resurrection of the dead, and that there is Angels and spirits, and it is true; hee was a *Pharisee* and brought up a *Pharisee*, and thus farre he kept the pharisaicall principles: so that this doth not hinder, but that in ordinary course two contrary factions, may combine against the truth, yet a Christian may sometimes so strike in with one, that hee may seeme not to bee an enemy to both; yea sometimes by an over-ruling providence of God it so fals out, that a Christian may cast such bonds, betweene two contrary Religions, that the Church may fare the better for it, but yet this will not long hold, for in time they will sawder together againe; *Paul*, though hee now scapes by this devise, if hee should have come before them, it would not have served his turne, hee was a *Pharisee* in one point or two, and they thought he had bin so in all; part of the truth, and part hee conceales, and that was his wisdome.

Vse 1. To teach all the Professours of the truth of Christ Iesus, neither to trust common enemies, though reconciled, nor to distrust one another to combine in any emulation or enmity one against another, not to trust common adversaries, let them make a league, never so firme as you conceive with us; though they may have just reason to joyne with a Protestant King, and though they now pretend their grounds and rules and ends are the same; yet they will soone breake all bonds and leagues of peace with Christians and sawder them-

themſelves together againe, and therefore truſt not ſuch, and if thoſe that are of contrary Religions, can take a courſe thus to combine together, to undermine a common enemy, ſhall not the Church of God ſo much the more, cleave together with one heart and voyce, with one ſhoulder, and with all their ſtrength as one man to reſiſt all the enemies of the truth of God, ſhall Gods owne ſervants bee ſo ready to hang of one from another, ſhouldering out one another and ſupplanting one another; ſhall *Phariſees* and *Sadduces* combine together, and ſhall not the Profeſſours of Chriſt joyne together as one man, and by one rule and to one end.

It may bee an uſe unto all men; Chriſtian men and all men of underſtanding, not to be led away with the pretences of unity and peace, unles you ſee and know that you joyn together alwaies in a common good cauſe; for even Gods owne ſervants ſometimes joyne together under pretence of unity and peace, which is not a ſufficient reaſon; for there may bee unity and peace even againſt Chriſt, and againſt his truth, and againſt a common cauſe of God; and therfore conſider upon what terms you go, what ends you aime at, this is needefull in all mutuall confederation and aſſociation in any buſineſſe whatſoever; and take heede of Satans cunning in ſtirring up any contentions and ſtrife among the people of God, but keep you your ſelvs in a bond of union for the truth of Chriſt, leaſt a common adverſary come upon you and undermine the truth of God by your means. *Vſe 2.*

Mat. 16. three first verses.

The Pharisees also with the Sadduces came unto him, &c.

COme wee now to the second Point, the end of this Question and Demand; the efficients wee heard, the *Pharisees* and *Sadduces*, *They came to him and tempted him*; tempting him to what end? Doe you thinke they desire a signe that they may beleeve, hee had immediately before in the latter end of the former Chapter, fed foure thousand men with seven loaves and a few fishes: An evident signe that he that did worke this miracle was sent from Heaven, they therefore did not demand a signe that they might beleeve, but in truth that they might not beleeve; and now, if hee should answer them according to their desire, they would have found a cavill against it; and if not, they will set downe and not beleeve, because he will not give them a *signe from Heaven.*

Doctrine 2. *To demand a signe not to confirme our faith, but to harden our selves in our unbeleefe is to tempt the Lord.*

They desire a signe that indeed they might bee excused from beleeving: hee therefore fitly cals them,

them, *verſ.* 4. *An evill and an adulterous generation, ſeekes a ſigne*; they anſwer that which an adulterous woman will doe, when her huſband ſends a ſervant to her or a letter to diſpoſe thus and thus of ſuch a buſineſſe, and ſhee though ſhee know his hand full well, yet notwithſtanding ſhee will aske of the ſervant a token, whether he comes indeed from his maſter or no, which token ſhee askes not for, as a confirmation of the thing to her, but that ſhee might bee excuſed from doing that which ſhee ſhould doe; juſt ſuch is this adulterous generation; as if hee ſhould ſay, they doe know *that Ieſus is a teacher ſent from God*, and they know that what hee ſpeakes is the word of God, and his meſſage is the truth of God; and that it is his hand and ſeale, ſealed it with the worke of his Spirit, and with the power of his miracles, and yet now they aske a ſigne, is it that they might beleeve? No, but to cavill with the meſſenger, and that they might not beleeve.

But becauſe this point is very ſeldome ſpoken too, this tempting of God, and yet a point of no ſmall conſequence in daily practiſe: let me therefore make it ſomething more plaine, the better to fit it for application.

Firſt, Therefore to ſhew you what it is to tempt God; and then why this kinde of asking a ſigne in this ſort is ſuch a tempting of God.

For the firſt, there is a two-fold tempting of God; one may tempt God as they in the Text, unlawfully, and manifeſt themſelves to be groſſe 1.

Hypocrites

Hypocrites in so doing, they never meant to beleeve.

2. Secondly, There is on the other side, somewhat a lawfull tempting of God. To open them both.

First, For an unlawfull and hypocriticall tempting of God, such as provokes the indignation and wrath of God.

Tempting of God is nothing else but a trying what God can or will doe for the fullfilling of our owne lusts. To try what is in God for that end, to put God to it, to shew foorth his divine hand for the fullfilling of our lusts, to set him a worke to stretch forth his divine hand for the fullfilling our owne desires.

Now for clearing it from the word. To answer you this Question, which may stumble some.

First, How can such a man as I put God to it, to shew foorth his divine hand, and to set him a worke; what can I doe to put him upon it, so as hee should thinke himselfe tempted by it.

Secondly, How should I doe it to fullfill my lusts, an instance of this you have in so many words, *Psal.*78.18. *They tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lusts*; in asking meat they put God to it: *Can God prepare a table, or give water in the wildernesse, and when he smote the stony rocke, and gave them water, and gave them bread, yet can hee give us flesh:* Thus they put him to it; doe they aske this to strengthen their faith? No, but to satisfie their lusts, they grew weary of *Manna*. But

But how can I be ſaid thus to tempt God, or to put him to it, to force him or to provoke him to ſtretch out his mighty hand, bee it his power or any other attribute for the fullfilling of my luſts?

Anſw. There are three things in the wayes of the ſonnes of men, by which God is much ſtirred up to ſhew foorth himſelfe, and we may tempt God by making uſe of any of them to fulfill our luſts.

First, God is ſtrongly provoked to worke if wee pray him, thus and thus to put foorth his hand to ſuch or ſuch a worke for our ſakes, and hee takes it to bee a ſtirring up himſelfe this way: So in the Text, *They came to him*, and deſired him to doe it, as *Joh. 6. 30. Shew us a ſigne from Heaven*, there was a deſire of ſuch a thing: and God is very ſenſible of prayer: men doe not thinke there is ſuch force in prayer, as there is, an Hypocrite cannot put God to it in prayer, but hee findes himſelfe provoked, not onely out of his compaſſion to his people, but out of his common goodneſſe to the creature, *Pſal. 65. 2.* The *young Ravens* cry not but God heares them, and *Geneſ.* 21. if young *Iſhmael* cry God heares him; yea and God heares the roaring of the young Lyons; God is ſenſible of any want, of which the creature deſires a ſupply from his hand, if it bee but the prayer of *Saddaces*, hee thinkes himſelfe ingaged by it, and though they do but tempt him, yet it provokes him; though hee ſhew his juſt diſplea-

sure against their so asking; this sets God a worke and his divine hand a worke, his whole goodnesse is set a worke. But yet there is something else sets God a worke besides prayer.

Therefore secondly, Faith exceedingly sets God a worke, it is an operative grace, whenever it is fastened upon any thing in God, though it bee a mis-guided Faith; if Faith bee stirring, or if it will not stirre, unlesse thus and thus answered: God is strongly provoked to doe something upon any worke of Faith.

Sometimes Faith will force a man to trust upon God for extraordinary blessings, without using ordinary meanes, when they may bee used: this is a delusory Faith, when God offers meanes, if men thrust themselves upon God in that sort: it provokes him exceedingly that a creature dares trust him in this kind, when hee hath not promised to worke: So when the Divell tempted our Saviour, *To cast himselfe downe head-long*, when hee might come downe another way, *Matth.* 4. 7. hee answers him, *thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*: Though a creature trusts upon God besides and against his promise, it sets him a worke, and were the thing according to his will, it would set him mightily a worke, but however it provokes him much, sometimes a man urges God with a false Faith; such a Faith as in which they will not trust God not in ordinary wayes and meanes, unlesse God will shew his extraordinary power, and that is a foule abuse of faith; men

will not, nor dare further trust him, not in an ordinary way and meanes, in the use of their ordinary callings, unlesse some expression of Gods extraordinary presence: So in *Exod.*17.2,7. *Is the Lord amongst us or no*, they doubted whether the God was amongst them or no, because they wanted something, they would have had some water by miracle, and because it is not easily ready, the rockes not powre out water, nor the Earth cleave asunder, and boyle up water from the great deepes; therefore is God with us? though they had plentifull experience God was with them, for hee had by a pillar of fire, led them that way; yet unlesse they have another extraordinary signe, they will not trust him in ordinary course; so our Saviour told the ruler, *Iohn* 4.41. *Vnlesse yee see signes and wonders, yee will not beleeve*, this is not to trust God in an ordinary way of his providence, but unlesse God confirme it extraordinarily, wee will not beleeve, and so God is exceedingly put to it; so that God takes himselfe to bee tempted when men will not trust him in an ordinary way.

Thirdly, Another grace in man that doth set God exceedingly a worke, and if mis-guided provokes and tempts him much, and that is obedience; for God hath promised (*Esay* 1.19,21.) much to obedience, and curses disobedience, *Deu.*28. and *Levit.*26. So that if wee obey Gods will, it provokes him to performe his promise; but now wee may provoke him preposterously and tempt him, when as wee dare not obey Gods

Commandements, if wee ſhould obey his Commandements, wee feare it ſhould goe ill with us, when in a way of obedience wee feare hard meaſure from God, and wrath from him; this tempts him, and when in a way of diſobedience, wee expect a reward and a bleſſing from him, a good iſſue, this tempts God much, *Num.* 14.3. God cals them to the promiſed Land, and hee ſent ſpies to ſee the fruits of it: Now when the people heard ſuch an ill report of the Land by ten of the ſpies, they fell a weeping and a murmuring, *wee and our children ſhall be made a prey*; ſo that they durſt not goe on to fight, but backe againe to *Ægypt* they would goe, no going an end with ſafety, backe again is beſt; but in a way of obedience, they feare evill from the hand of God: See how God is troubled at it; they have tempted mee now theſe ten times, whereupon he tels them; *Surely this people ſhall not ſee that good Land*; becauſe they looked for miſcheife in a good way, they ſhould finde evill in a way of diſobedience to his will; and ſo hee takes that for a temptation; then the people diſcerning their errour, *verſe* 40, 41. They tell him they will go now and fight againſt the *Canaanites*; then ſaith *Moſes*, *why doe you thus againe tempt the Lord*; But now when they looke for the preſence of the Lord, hee will not bee with them: So that you ſee if the creature ſhall put God to it, by Prayer or Faith, or Obedience, this ſtirres up God in this kinde, and it is a tempting of the Lord.

Now

Now men may desire it when it is for the satisfying of their lusts.

When therefore wee either pray, or trust, or obey, or disobey God, for any thing therby to fulfill our lusts, this is to tempt God: So it is said of *Annanias* and *Saphira*, *why agree you together to tempt the Spirit of God*; they intend to put Gods patience to it; to see whether God would beare with them in that dissimulation or no, and to see whether God was so present with the Apostles or no, to see if *Peter* could discerne their dissimulation, and they did it for their own covetousnesse sake. Now when they will try the patience of God, and the power of the Spirit of God, for their present covetousnesse sake, this is to tempt God; they make use of Gods patience to shew himselfe in this kinde, to see whether his patience would beare it or no. So you reade in that former place of *Numbers*, when they desire flesh and water, they desired them to satisfie their lusts, and put God to it, to expresse his mighty power for that end, and this is called a tempting of God: *You aske and receive not, because you aske to spend it upon your lusts, Iam.* 4. 3.

But yet further, this will be better understood, if I shall shew you how farre wee may lawfully tempt God with acceptance from him.

Lawfully may wee tempt the Lord, sometimes in our Prayers, sometimes in our Faith, and some-

sometimes in our obedience in all these being rightly ordered.

Sometimes in our very prayers wee may aske a signe and yet not bee said to tempt God; I meane, not in an ill sence, but it is only to set God a worke to give us a signe.

First, If God offer us a signe, then God takes it ill if wee doe not aske it, as was the case of *Ahaz*, *Esay* 7.10.to 14. But because God in these dayes doth not ordinarily offer signes, therefore,

Secondly, We may pray for a signe when the necessity of our callings require it, extraordinary callings require extraordinary signes, and ordinary an ordinary signe in these dayes, *Act.* 4.29,30. shew foorth signes and wonders for the confirmation of thy truth, 2 *Kings* 2.13,14. *Where is the Lord God of Elijah*, hee would see the Almighty Power of God that rested upon *Elijah*: And as for extraordinary; so a man may desire an ordinary signe to confirme his ordinary calling. Notable is that Speech of *David*, many discouragements hee had, hee was called to a kingdome, but every man opposed him; his calling was an ordinary calling to succeed his Master in a place which hee was well fitted for, but wanted a signe to confirme it to him, *Psalm.*86.17. *Shew a token unto thy servant for good, that they who hate me may be ashamed when they see it*: How should *David* bee confirmed in this? He knew hee had a calling, but every man thought it otherwise, and therefore now shew a token unto

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thy servant for good: What an extraordinary one? No no, but such an one as might confirme to him his calling that hee had in hand, and soe, *Psalm.*41.11. *By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemies doe not triumph over me.* If God preserve him from his enemies thats a token to him for good; let God protect him and assist him, and guide him and inlarge him with gifts for his place, and that is a token to him for good; and this is a lawfull demand of a token: Just as *Samuel* gave to *Saul*, when hee was called to bee king, a spirit fit for his calling came upon him, 1 *Sam.*10.9. and this *Saul* might have prayed for, hee was a man fearefull of that calling, *ver.*22. hee said, *The worke was too mighty for him*: But if God give another spirit, hee shall thereby know his calling to it.

And there is another signe; for there are two sorts of signes for ones ordinary calling, one more inward, the other more outward, in some outward providence that beares witnesse to that calling, *ver.*4. that shall bee one signe to him: a stranger shall meet thee, and give thee two loavs of bread, which thou shalt receive at his hand, a signe of encouragement, the sonnes of *Belial* discouraged him, but those whose hearts God had touched followed *Saul*, *v.*26.

Now in such a case as this a man may aske an ordinary signe for the confirmation of an ordinary calling.

Thirdly, A man may aske a signe to confirme him in his calling, when his faith will not uphold

hold him; *Gideon* was doubtfull, but desires to have his faith helped by a signe, *Iudg.* 6, 36. to 40. and God answers him according to the desire of his heart; and when God shall cast us into such occasions that wee shall see neede of a signe, in regard of the weakenesse of our faith, and the necessity of our calling, or else because God offers a signe, then if Faith bee discouraged; it is not to tempt God to desire a signe, but to serve his providence, and to use his ordinances, and to set him a worke for the strengthening of us in our callings.

And as wee may set God a worke in asking a signe, so in Prayer also for the fullfilling of all our just desires, and especially to fullfill his own will in us, to assist us in our worke, and there is no prayer you so make, but you put God mightily to it, if you pray for a blessing according to his will; hee is provoked to shew himselfe, and to manifest all that goodnesse that is in him for you.

2 But secondly, wee tempt God acceptably, if our faith worke in our prayers, *Dan.* 6. 26. *Daniel* was delivered, because hee beleeved on his God; as if the question lay betweene God and the lyons, whether of them should have most force; hee beleeved God, notwithstanding the kings courtiers displeasure, God sent his Angels to stop the Lyons mouths, and so manifested himselfe to be stronger then the Lyons.

3. Thirdly, In a way of obedience God loves to be tempted, and cals not men hypocrites for so doing, *Mal.* 3. 10. if they payed *tythes* duely they thought

thought they ſhould not have enough for themſelves and theirs; but ſaith God, pay them, and then proove mee upon that point, and ſee if I will not powre upon you a bleſſing till there bee no roome to receive it; which ſhewes that obedience is the onely way to proſper: obey you, what I command, and ſanctifie my name in my ordinances, and then ſee what I will doe; in this caſe a man may lawfully prove what God will doe; but this is not to fullfill our luſts, but to performe the duties of our callings, to bee made inſtruments of Gods ſervice in our places; eſpecially if my faith doubt, whether I ſhall bee inlarged or no, now proove God if he will not ſhow himſelfe for us.

Reaſon of the Point. It is a tempting of God, becauſe this is a ſatisfying of their owne luſts, and not asked for the fullfilling of any will of God in the duties of our callings, but to harden our ſelves in our unbeleefe: If God refuſe to give them their deſire, they might well refuſe to beleeve, and if hee did give it them, then they would have matter to cavill at; Gods will is to give no ſigne, but to beget or increaſe Faith; that was the firſt inſtitution of ſignes, *Exod.* 4.8. Strange tounges are to make men beleeve more ſtrongly, 1 *Cor.* 14.22. to ſatisfie luſts is incredulity, 2 *King.* 20.8. to 11. *Annanias* hee to ſatisfie his covetouſneſſe; and *Herod* to ſatisfie his curioſity, *Luk.* 23.8. to harden their hearts in unbeleif, to ſtrengthen them in their ſins; this is an evill tempting of God.

Vse 1. First, It serves to reproove the Popish demands of signes from our Divines, they mightily presse upon us for signes and miracles, they would have us to confirme our Doctrine and Faith by miracles: Now I would know but thus much of them; whether if wee should shew them signes, would they beleeve, or doe they not aske a signe to excuse themselves from beleeving, and that is to satisfie their lusts, and all such demands, are but so many temptings of God: It was verified in our Saviours hearers: Though hee had done so many miracles among them, *yet they beleeved not on him*, *Ioh.*12.37. nor did they meane to beleeve on him: No though one should have come from the dead; though wee could raise up men from the dead to tell them the truth of the Religion wee professe, they would not beleeve it. It is said of many of the Jewes, they beleeved *Iohn* though hee wrote no miracle, *Iohn* 10.41, 42. and why cannot they beleeve us, though we worke none, and the same exception they make against us, was made against *Iohn* by the *Scribes*: If wee speake of our ordinary calling, they aske us where is our succession from the Primitive times; if extraordinary; then where are your miracles; so they questioned *Iohn*; if his calling was ordinary, where was his commission; if extraordinary, where were his miracles: Why, he healed many a blind soule, and raised up many a soule from death to life, and fed many an hungry poore soul, and were not all these great miracles; and so if God helpe Protestant Ministers to goe forth

foorth in the power of Christ to heale sicke souls, and to give light and life to dead spirits, and to give them strength and power to walke in the wayes of Gods Commandements. Is not heere bundels of miracles sometimes compact together in one poore Protestant Minister.

This will serve to shew you a difference betweene a cavilling Hypocrite, and an humble Christian: A cavilling Hypocrite alwaies wants meanes to beleeve and obey: These heere in the Text had seene even now five thousand fedde with a few loaves and a few fishes, and why did they not then beleeve, why they wanted a signe from Heaven; they pretend that before, but they beleeved not; because they want a signe, want meanes to beleeve, and therefore hee cals them hypocrites, it is a true spirit of an hypocrite, hee beleeves not nor obeyes, because hee conceives some reason to the contrary, but an humble Christian is of a quite contrary frame of spirit; hee ever sees hee hath meanes, cause enough, ground enough to beleeve and obey, he hath just reason to doe all that God cals for: But oh! The hardnesse of the heart of an hypocrite: If this bee a signe of an hypocrite for a man to cavill at want of meanes to cause him to beleeve and obey, then it is a good signe of sincerity to confesse before God and our brethren that hee hath great cause to beleeve all the truthes of God; and all the counsell of God, but hee hath an unbeleeving heart, a streight spirit, and that grieves him to the heart; hee blames not God but himselfe *Vse 2.*

selfe for his unbeleefe; so shall you observe it, many men who are not yet in an estate of grace, who yet live under meanes of grace, aske him why hee doth not beleeve and obey: hee will conceive and say, the fault is sometimes in God, and sometimes in the Minister, if the Minister would preach so or so, and sometimes if the Sermon were more plaine, and sometimes if more learned, and sometimes a little shorter, hee would beleeve and obey, something is ever wanting in the meanes, that God provides for us, and there is not enough in it to bring us to beleeve, but if thy heart were honest and sincere thou wouldst not finde fault with God, but thus an hypocrite puts God to shew foorth some extraordinary change in making people such as hee seldome makes any, thou wilt live no where but shalt find Christians many wayes failing, but God must worke miracles else you will not beleeve: If all Christians were so humble, and meeke and faithfull, and helpefull one to another, and so rejoycing one in another, then you could beleeve; but if you goe from *Barwicke* to *Dover*, and from one end of the earth to another, and if you should stay till you saw all Christians thus tempered, you should scarce ever beleeve, there may bee cause enough in us Ministers to hinder you; but its doubtfull, had you other Ministers the Word would finde as little acceptance, and therefore, lay not the fault where it is not, I meane not so much fault, as to hinder

der you from beleeving and obeying, but let the fault bee where it will, there is no fault in God; let us all say, this meanes that wee have is sufficient, because it serves other men to turne to God by; and why not you, other men can bee willing to beleeve and obey, and though there bee many failings in Ministers and Christians, yet they can see cause why they should beleeve and obey, and therefore let not the fault lie upon God, but learne with feare and trembling to submit to the will and truth of God in whatever he cals for.

Let it bee an use of disswasion to us from tempting of God, and of exhortation, to perswade us to lay downe all tempting of him in any sinnefull and hypocriticall way; lay aside these Sadducean and Pharisaicall deceits, meddle not with them, you see how much it provokes God, hee was wrath, because they had tempted him, *Psal.*78.18,22. *and he swore they should never enter into his rest*, *Psal.*95.9,11. and therefore take heede how you tempt God, you say you doe not; let mee say to you, if any of you shall walke in a way of disobedience, and in a carnall estate, and blesse your selves therein, and still deferre thy repentance to thy last end, thou now puts God to it, to shew foorth an extraordinary patience day after day, and yeere after yeere, how long must God stay, must hee still reach foorth patience, such as no man would extend towards any, take heed it bee not to your owne confusion in the end: *Ananias* and *Saphira* *Vse.* 3.

phira tried Gods patience till they were both ſuddenly ſtrucke dead: So there are many that live idly, and take no courſe to provide for themſelvs or theirs, but thinke God and friends will maintaine them; ſuch truſt God beyond ordinary meanes, and tempt him to ſhew foorth an extraordinary power. And other men there are that make account they are grown ripe, and therfore will not pray nor heare; but when the Spirit mooves them, and will not alwaies attend upon the Word; its for them to attend the Spirit, and not to depend upon the letter, and ſo deſpiſe the meanes, it is a wretched tempting of God, to thinke God ſhould reach out his Spirit to build up men in good waies, and yet men uſe no means to that end, in hearing or prayer or conference; and if we ſtand delaying and deferring with God till his Spirit bee ſo provoked, that hee will never offer grace more; it will bee woe to us.

Vſe 4. It ſerves to teach (notwithſtanding) Gods own people; ſince there is a kind of tempting of God, which is holy and acceptable, wiſely to ponder the difference of tempting of God, that wee may make uſe of him when wee are called to it; and therefore it is to teach us in ſome caſes, with modeſty and reverence and humility to bee ſo bold as to aske a ſigne, and yet not to feare wee ſhall be rejected as Hypocrites for ſo doing: If God call us to an ordinary calling, which himſelfe hath appointed us, and wee finde our hearts fearefull of the iſſue of it; in ſuch a caſe you may faithfully depend

depend on God, you may pray for ſignes upon that, as *Eliſha* in his extraordinary calling, deſires his Maſters ſpirit: So many a Miniſter, God hath furniſht him with gifts, and the people call him out, but he it may be through modeſty is timerous and fearefull to goe on in the worke, why now ſay, Lord heere is *Elijahs* profeſſion, a Miniſters calling; but where is the Lord God of *Elijah*, that ſhould now furniſh me with a ſpirit of wiſedome and knowledge and zeale, to fit me for this buſineſſe; ſo a Magiſtrate, if God put the mantle of a Magiſtrate upon any of you; if you come with feare and trembling and diſtruſt your owne ſufficiency, and aske for the Lord God of that calling, you may expect that God will give you another heart, you may ſay, *Shew ſome token for good unto thy ſervant*, that I may bee kept and preſerved in my calling, and enlarged and walke in obedience therein; wee ſhall not now tempt him ſinnefully; but in ſuch a caſe God takes himſelfe wrought upon, and then hee will ſhew forth his divine hand, In all things we have occaſion to uſe him in; ſometimes men feare the loſſe of wealth and honour and credit; if they ſhould walk in a way of cloſe obedience with God, and ſo it hinders them from many a good work: but hearken to Gods Word; doe but proove God, and ſee if hee will not open the windowes of Heaven to you in ſuch a caſe: doe but proove God; if you finde your hearts too weake, intreate God to ſtrengthen you, and waite upon him for the accompliſhment of ſuch promiſes as wherein hee hath

hath promised helpe and assistance, and he would then take it for a dishonour to his name if hee should not answer you above all that you can aske or thinke for.

Vse 5. If God take it well when wee thus tempt him, and ill, if wee tempt him in any preposterous manner; let this then teach us to take in good part if God should tempt us. God is willing to bee set a worke at our tempting of him in a good manner. Why should not wee doe the same, if it please God to tempt and try us, *Gen.*22.1,2. God tempted *Abraham*, and so God tempts his people, and leaves the *Canaanites* to tempt and to proove them, *Deut.*13.3 *Ier.*3.4.

There is a double temptation God is wont to put upon all his servants.

First, Make account there is no grace God hath given you, bee it never so eminent, but God will take some time to proove you in it, and how you may imploy it to the utmost good; God that gives talents will not have them put under a bushell, hee will one time or other put you to expresse the utmost strength of your strongest grace, whether it be obedience, or faith, or patience, or meeknesse, or love, or zeale; somtimes, indeed through the pride of a mans heart, and sometimes by reason of the unthankfull world, the best gifts in a man are smoothered, and so they reape not the comfort of them. But otherwise, if God give *Ioseph* in his fathers house a spirit of wisedome and governement, hee will take a time to call him to *Pharaohs* Court, *Psa.*105.14. *Iunius* takes

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it for the word of eternall life, till the word was fullfilled the Lord Jesus Christ tryed *Ioseph* with many exercises; but *Ioseph* had many excellent gifts, and had hee alwaies lived in his Fathers house, hee had beene obscured: So if God give you gifts, hee will put you to tryall; it is a signe God accepts his people, if hee take pleasure to try their gifts.

Sometimes againe, as God will try them in their best gifts, and honour himselfe by them; so God sometimes tryes the best of his peoples graces, that they may see their owne weakenesses, wherein they are most strong; God will have a time to glorifie himselfe, in shewing them their weakenesse, in their best condition. If Gods people faile, it is in their best gifts, especially if tryed by small occasions; if wee be tryed in great occasions, God will in an especiall manner assist us; but in a small triall, in our greatest gifts, commonly wee faile most; *Abraham* a man of an admirable Faith, if put to tryall in sacrificing his sonne, hee can loose his sonne and the promises of life, and Christ in them, then he can hazard the losse of them all: God then ment to try him in his great Faith, and hee overcame; God tryes him againe in the same Faith, in a farre lesse matter, in the King of *Ægypts* court; though God had promised to keepe him, where ever hee came; yet there was hee afraid: See how the faith of this Father of the faithfull warpes in a small temptation, in his great Faith hee shewes great weakenesse. *Moses* the meek- 2.

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keſt man on the Earth, yet impatience and want of meekeneſſe kept him out of *Canaan*: So *Peter*, moſt zealous for Chriſt; and yet if hee meete with the temptation but of a ſilly Damſell, about the forwardneſſe of his Profeſſion, hee then denies that ever hee knew Chriſt, and ſo in his greateſt gifts, hee ſhewes his greateſt weakeneſſe. *Iob*, whoſe patience was admirable, yet was chiefly wanting in patience upon tryall: *Hezekiah* God left him to trie him, in the buſineſſe of the *Babylonian* Embaſſadours, and there hee was lifted up, 2 *Cron.* 32. 31. When our tryals are great, then wee gather up our loynes to God, and thinke wee have much cauſe to draw neare to God, and to pray and to uſe all our faith and obedience, and then God mightily helpes us; but in our beſt gifts, if God put us upon weake tryals and occaſions, wee commonly there faile. *David* a man after Gods own heart, after Gods will, who followed Gods will in his whole courſe, reſted and relyed on Gods will; and yet even *David*, in a ſmall tryall, when a ſmall temptation is ſet before him, hee can luſt after another mans wife, and ſoe failes in that grace wherein hee was moſt excellent. Now therefore looke to it, ſince God honours himſelfe by your trying of him: So if God put you to any tryall, call you out to uſe all the gifts and graces you have: Bee willing to ſerve Gods Providence in ſuch a caſe, and keepe your hearts humble, that God may uſe you to his advantage, and take heede that you doe

doe not then warpe moſt when you have leaſt occaſion, but waite daily upon Chriſt, that hee may ſupport you, that himſelfe may receive honour by and from you: When it pleaſes him to call you to tryall, and his truth and cauſe may gaine advantage by you.

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MATTH. 16. 1, 2, 3.

And he said unto them, when it is evening, yee say it will be fair weather, for the skie is red.

EE now come to speake of the third Point from these words, and the Doctrine is this.

Doctrine 3. *That to pretend more ignorance, or uncertainty in descerning the signes of the times, then the signes of the weather, is meere Hypocrisie.*

You Hypoccites you can discerne the face of the skie; you can tell, at least have a neare gesse by the colour of the sky in the evening, what weather the next morning will be, and by the morning what weather the day will be, but can you not *discerne the signes of the times:* a signe therefore that they are no better then Hypocrites, who are better acquainted and able to discerne the signes of the weather then the signes of the times of their visitation.

Now give me leave, first to open you, what Christ meanes by *the signes of the times.*

2. What are those signes of the times, which declare men to be hypocrites for not discerning.

3. Why it is such a worke of hypocrisie.

4. The uses of what is delivered.

For the first; for *the signes of the times*, that (in

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a word) is the evident marke or signe of the times and seasons, the day of their visitation by the Lord Jesus Christ, who now came to visit and redeeme his people, according to *Simeons* song; now is the time of their visitation by Christ, from whom they desired a signe from Heaven that they might know this was he. The same is mentioned, *Luk* 19.41. *&c.* our Saviour wept over *Hierusalem*, and said, *Oh that thou hadst knowne the day of thy visitation, but now they are hid from thine eyes:* because they did not know the time of their visitation, therefore their case was miserable, that was the time of their peace, the time wherein God offered them termes of reconciliation and attonement with God, that's the first time, the time of their peace.

Now what were those *signes of the times*, for want of discerning of which, and yet being able to discerne the signes of the weather, our Saviour argues them of meere hypocrisie.

There are three or foure signes of these times of their visitation, which had they not bin willingly blind, they could not but have seene.

First, the time limited of their visitation was now accomplished; so as they could not but see it: The times fore-told ofold by the Prophets, and that limited time being now come to a period; *Iacob* had told them upon his death-bed, *Genes.* 49.10. *The Scepter shall not depart from Iudah, nor a Law-giver from betweene his feete untill Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people bee*; that time was now expired, the *Scepter* was departed 1.

from *Iudah*, and was in the dominion of *Herod*, and the *Law-giver* was taken away, the *Romane Empire* made lawes, and ruled as it pleased them. *Shiloh* therefore now must needs bee come, for God fore-told, they should not want soveraigne authority among themselves till he came.

Another time, but under the same head of signes of times fore-told and now come to the period is that you reade of in *Dan.9.24,27. The seventy weekes were determined unto the city and people of God, to bring in everlasting righteousnesse*; these seventy weekes were now accomplished by their account, and according to the truth, and this was another signe of the time.

2. Secondly, Another signe of the times was certaine Propheſies, of what should accompany the *Messiah* his comming and what himselfe should doe at his comming. It was fore-told that God *would send Elijah, or one in the power and spirit of Elijah before him, and hee should turne the hearts of the Fathers to the children*, &c. *Mal.4. 5,6.* and that hee would *send his Messenger before him*, *Mal. 3.1.* and that was *Iohn Baptist*, *Matth.11.10,14.* Now *Iohn* was come already, and they did to him what themselves thought good. It was further prophecied, that in the dayes of the *Messiah*, *The feet of the lame should skip, and the mouth of the dumbe should be opened and the eares of the deafe should heare*, &c. *Esay 35.5,6.* Why you reade, *Matth.11.5.* at the same time when they came to him, hee had caused *the blind to see, and the deaf to heare*, &c. and so had accomplished what he

hee had fore-prophecied ſhould bee done.

Thirdly, Another ſigne of their time of viſitation by the *Meſſiah* was, in that it pleaſed God to aſſiſt Chriſt, as none of all the Prophets ever wrought before, *Iohn* 15.24. Such miracles as never man wrought, a ſigne therefore, when they come to aske a ſigne from Heaven, and ſee ſuch ſignes in him, as was never wrought before, at leaſt not by any in their owne name and ſtrength; for them now to aske him a ſigne, was an argument of groſſe hypocriſie. 3.

Fourthly, Another ſigne of the time of their viſitation, which if they had not beene willfully blinde, and had had any diſcerning of the wayes of God, they could not but have ſeene, and that was that all the children of wiſdome juſtified our Saviour, and followed him, and depended upon his mouth, planted the ſtrength and ſtay of their ſalvation, and redemption in him, *Matth.* 11.19. and that was a ſigne to them, *when judgement ſhould bee turned into righteouſneſſe, Pſal.* 94.3,5. the judicious and right ordering of mens wayes, when that appeares to be righteous; the upright ſhall ſee the wiſdome of God in it; and the common-people themſelves ſay, when they ſaw Chriſt raiſe the widdowes ſonne from death to life; *Doubtleſſe*, ſay they, *a great Prophet is come amongſt us, and God hath viſited his people*: theſe were evident ſignes of the times of their viſitation, all bare witneſſe to the gracious words that came out of his mouth, and gave up themſelves to bee taught by him, theſe were all evident ſignes and 4.

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plaine to be discerned: *Nichodemus* said, *Wee know thou art a teacher sent from God, Iohn* 3.2. for no man could doe these things except God were with him, and it was not onely evident, but certaine and sure, for 2 *Pet.* 1.19. they had a *sure word of prophecie* for it, and they saw certaine and sure accomplishments of what was fore-prophecied. So that it was evident without all exception, and all of them such signes of such matters as nearely concerned them to have respect unto; but the signes of the weather is but conjecturall, and many times failes, and when they doe not faile, they are not such evident signes; but that a plaine or wise man may be ignorant of them, and say, they were both certaine and evident, yet doe not so nearely concerne us, as the knowledge of the signes of our visitation for our everlasting peace.

Now in the next place to shew you why this is such a signe of Hypocrisie, that men should bee more weather wise, then wise to see the estate of their own souls, and should be better able to discerne these obscure things and uncertain matters, then plain and most necessary things.

Reason 1. It is taken from the comparison of these two truthes together; these truthes of the signes of the weather, are but conjecturall and obscure, and altogether lesse necessary for a man to bee acquainted with: These truthes concerning the times of our visitation, are certaine and evident, and most profitable and necessary to bee knowne: now for a man to be apt to bee skilled in the weather,

ther, in matters more unsafe and obscure, and to pretend more skill therein, then in matters that are more evident and certain, and more necessary, is plain hypocrisie.

For a little to speake to these things.

It is true, many times it fals out when these signes are given in the sky, that a red evening, a bright cleare, is a signe of a faire day the next day; but the reason of this, is neither so evident to every eye, nor alwaies so sure, nor so evident and certaine, but it may faile.

The best reason given, that I meete with in this case is this, the brightnes of the clouds in the evening is a signe, they say, of the rarietyor thinnes of the ayre, in which these clouds are, and is thorowly pierced by the beames of the Sunne, and easily shed or driven away, and so the matter of foule weather is remooved: The cleere brightnesse of the cloud in the evening is a signe that the cloud is rare and thinne, and the body of the cloud pierced thorowly, by the beames of the Sunne, whence it is that the matter or cause of foule weather is discipated. And so for a reason of the other; If the morning be red and lowring, you say it is a signe of a stormy day: So also I say, the reason of this is not easie for every man to discerne, but these men resolve upon the conclusion, whether they know the reason or no. But the reasons I meete with in nature are these in this case; they say, there is some rariety in some part of the cloude, but in that it is cloudy, it is a signe there is thicker matter in the cloude then

the Sunne beames can readily pierce through; and therefore becauſe of the heavineſſe of the matter, the Sun beams cannot drive thoſe clouds away, nor are able of a ſudden to diſſolve and diſcipate them into winde or raine; but in time they make account winde and raine will follow: but the clouds being lowry and ſad, ſhew an eaſineſſe in the clouds, now to diſſolve themſelvs and to water the Earth, and in the end will burſt foorth into raine and winde that day.

Now firſt, neither of theſe reaſons is certainly evident, and every man that obſerves them to bee evident, yet findes them not alwaies certain: And thoſe that are beſt able to diſcerne the reaſon, and the naturall cauſes are not able to ſay, that event hath and will alwayes follow; but both theſe may fall ſhort of an anſwerable ſucceſſe; for though evening clouds be red, and ſo thoſe thinne clouds likely to be waſted; yet who can tell, but that the Sunne may gather up new clouds, from the other ſide of the Heaven, before it riſe to us in the next morning: and if it draw thoſe vapors after it, as many times it doth, wee may then have ill weather. And againe, ſuppoſe the morning doe looke red and louring, as many times it doth, and therefore by reaſon the Sunne cannot pierce the clouds wholly through, it is likely to breake foorth into winde or raine before noone or one of clocke that day; yet it many times fals out that though clouds bee red and louring in the morning, and of ſuch an heavy weight, that the Sun cannot peirce through

ſo ſoone as it riſeth, but yet by that time the Sun is growne high, and the beames fall more directly upon the clouds, and ſo conſequently beate more ſtrongly upon them; it comes to paſſe that before noone the Sunne hath pierſed through, and ſcattered the clouds, that you have faire weather after a louring morning. This is evident in ordinary experience, ſo that there is neither ſuch ſure, evident, unalterable truth in theſe things, nor ſuch evident plainneſſe, as theſe *Phariſees* perſwaded themſelves there was in them.

But ſuppoſe theſe ſignes of the weather did ever follow, and the reaſons were evident; yet notwithſtanding, neither the ſignes of the weather, nor the cauſes of them are of ſuch neceſſary conſequence, as that a man ſhould buſie himſelfe with the obſervation of it, or the ſtudy of the reaſon of it, for all the uſe of it, is but for what a man ſhould doe that day; and a man that hath buſineſſe, will not bee hindered by the face of the ſky, and whatever the evening ſhewes, yet hee reſolves his buſineſſe next morning, and if hee be croſſed, it is not greatly materiall with him. But for a man when hee hath the ſignes of the times ſet before him; for a man then not to know the day of his viſitation, this being a matter that ſo nearely concernes him, upon which his eternall weale or woe depends, not to know this, a matter ſo neceſſary, ſo eaſy to be diſcerned, ſo dangerous to be neglected; for a man not to doe this, it is a ſigne his heart is full of guile and hypocriſie, he thinkes he can ſee and diſcerne the ſtate

of the weather, but how to order his estate and soule before God, hee hath no understanding, *O you Hypocrites!* It is the nature of hypocrisie to bee very quick sighted in points of nature, but very dull and heavy in matters of Religion and grace, *Sottish children, Ier.4.22. Luk.16.8. The children of this world are wiser in their generation then the children of the light*; but in things pertaining to God they are blinde and ignorant; the nature of hypocrisie is to be exact and curious in small matters, *Matth 23.23.* but in more weighty matters of the Law, about their everlasting estate, they are therein blind: not to bee able to discerne spirituall things when they are manifested to us in a plain and a cleere signe; this is grosse hypocrisie.

Reason 2. Another reason for which our Saviour justly taxes these men of hypocrisie is this: When a man pretends want of light in his understanding and judgement, when as indeed the want is in the subjection of his will to the thing set before him; they pretend want of light in the judgement, they would have the judgement convinced, that this was the *Messiah* sent from Heaven. Now signes are to convince the judgement and understanding, no man could doe such things as hee did, unlesse sent of God; but that was not the Point; our Saviour truly cals them Hypocrites, there was no want of light to give them knowledge or understanding, they had signes enough from heaven and from earth; and therfore there was no want of meanes to satisfie their judgments;

but

but all the hinderance lay in the wilfullneſſe of their owne hearts, they were not willing to beleeve.

Another argument of hypocriſie in them was this, that they are more ready to lay the fault of unbeleefe upon God, not giving them ſufficient helpes, then upon themſelves, who had meanes enough to leave them without excuſe; for a man to charge upon God, the cauſe of unbeleife, to pretend hee could beleeve if hee had a ſigne, and a ſigne can onely be given by God, and they ſay, they beleeve not, becauſe God gives them not ſufficient meanes of beleife: this is the frame of the ſpirit of hypocriſie, to tax God for want of meanes of Faith to beleeve, which if they had they pretend they would make uſe of, wherein God was not wanting to give them abundance of meanes, *Iohn* 12.37. though he had wrought ſo many miracles among them, yet they beleeved not a ſigne: God was not wanting to convince them of their unbeleife, yet they beleeved not. *Reaſon* 3.

From hence wee may learne every ſoule of us, to ſtir up our ſelves to a wiſe diſcerning the ſignes of the times of our viſitation; As ever wee deſire to have any teſtimony of the truth and ſincerity of our owne hearts, as wee deſire not to bee upbraided by the Lord Jeſus himſelfe our Saviour and judged for hypocrites, it behooves us all to be well acquainted with the ſignes of the times of our viſitation, and much more and better, then with al the ſigns of the face of the sky; you ſee how *Vſe* 1.

much it did irke and grieve our Saviour, *Luke* 19.41,42. *Hee wept over Hierusalem, because she knew not the day of her visitation:* As if hee should say; it were a case most lamentable and fit for any that ever wisht poore *Hierusalem* well, to deplore it with bitter teares; it is a most lamentable and miserable case, that persons and places should not discerne the times of their visitation; the estate of men that doe not know such a time, is an estate of hypocrisie, and a fore-ruuner of certaine calamity. Would a man know a fore-running signe of following misery and calamity by; this is one (and none of the least) that sure that mans or Churches calamity is neare, that knows not the day of his visitation, takes not knowledge of the time that God offers him grace. It is ever a fore-running signe of a mans lamentable and utter ruine, when a mans friends and all that know him, may sit and weepe over him, hee knowes not the time of his happinesse, and now woe and misery is fallen upon him.

Now because this is a point of more then ordinary use, and yet I doe not affect curiosity, yet me thinkes our Saviour would imply something in comparing the signes of the time, and the signes of the weather together. And God having usually made this world to be a mappe and shaddow of the spirituall estate of the soules of men: therefore give me leave for the better discerning of things in this kinde; learne wee to discerne the signes of our owne times; for the signes of the weather in which our Saviour makes his compa-

riſon, and there are certaine ſignes and ſeaſons of the weather to which a man may compare the eſtate of his owne time and ſeaſon.

There are 3. or 4 ſeaſons and times of viſitation, which it behooves Chriſtians to know them well, as they would avoid the imputation of hypocriſie and prevent danger of calamity.

Firſt, There be times and ſignes of times of grace offered, that is, the times in which God viſits men with offers of grace.

Secondly, There be times and ſignes of times of grace received, and it is a very needfull thing to know the time and ſigne of it.

Thirdly, There be alſo times and ſigns of times of graces decaying and withering.

Fourthly, there be ſignes of times of judgments removed, and of mercies breaking in upon us.

Fifily, there be alſo times of judgements threatned, and ſignes of their breaking in upon us.

All theſe Chriſtians ſhould be well acquainted with, and if not, you ſee it is taxed by our Saviour of palpable hypocriſie.

Firſt, (becauſe J would go no further then the Text) See it as in the face of the ſky, God hath laied downe a right obſervation of the ſignes of our viſitation: How ſhall I diſcerne the ſignes of the times of the viſitation of my owne ſoule, for grace offered; that this is the time that God offers grace to my heart, that J doe not out-ſit my time: How ſhall J know it? How doe you diſcerne that God cals you to your buſineſſe, to walke about the duties of your particular calling: by the ſame 1.

ſame, may you diſcerne, when God cals you to accept the offers of grace; the Apoſtle gives us evident light in this kinde, *Rom.* 12. 11,12. *It is high time now for us to awake out of ſleepe*; how doth hee know that? why the night is farre ſpent and the day is at hand; a man knowes his time to riſe, hee will for ſhame get up, when the day breaks and the Sunne ariſes, and ſhines in at his window. And is it not high time for a man to awake out of the darkneſſe of ignorance, and the ſleepe of carnall ſecurity, when the light of the Goſpell ſhines cleerly, and the Sonne of Righteouſneſſe ariſes with healing in his wings, and ſtares into our minds and conſciences, and will not ſuffer us to ſleepe, but will ſo forceably enter in, that wee cannot but ſee and heare and bee converted, unleſſe wee will be wilfully blinde: when the day dawnes and the day ſtarre ariſes in our hearts, is it not now time to riſe, 2 *Pet.* 1. 19. The *Law* was *a light*, but it was in a Lanthorne, or in a *darke place, and was not eaſily diſcerned, but in the end the day ſtarre appeares*, that is the preaching and diſpenſation of the Goſpell, and the Sonne of Righteouſneſſe cloſely followes the preaching of the Goſpell, and ſo diſplayes and manifeſts himſelfe, even as the Sunne followes the day ſtarre; it is called the Shepheards ſtarre, the day ſtarre; and ſo this ſtarre of the Goſpell is the Shepheards ſtarre; the Miniſters are ſtarres when they ariſe with cleare and pure diſpenſations of the Goſpell, and manifeſtations thereof in the faces and hearts of the ſonnes of men: Chriſt him-

himſelfe followes cloſe the pure miniſtration of his Goſpell, and that's the day of ſalvation; the very ſigne of the time of grace offered, the time when the day ſtarre ariſes, if a man diſcerne not that to be his time, and put it off from this time to that, thou knoweſt not how ſoone this day ſtarre may be taken away, and the Sunne wrapt up in a cloude; and then mayeſt thou goe farre enough to ſeeke the like offers of grace, that heere thou hadſt diſpenced and never finde them; and therefore it behooves men to take notice of the ſignes of the times of their viſitation: *Ariſe my Love, my Dove, and come away, Cant.* 2. 10. to 13. whence muſt ſhee come? from the Babilonian darkeneſſe; why ſo, what is the ſigne of her time to ariſe? *For the winter is paſt and the Spring drawes on; the raine is over, the flowers appeare in the earth; the time of the ſinging of birds is come, and the voyce of the Turtle is heard in our land,* &c. *Ariſe my faire one and come away*; See how hee preſſes her againe and againe and now to ariſe, and now it is the time of her viſitation and offer of grace, when the winter is paſt, when the coldneſſe and darkeneſſe of ignorance and ſecurity and ſuperſtition is paſt; and when the birds begin to ſing, and the voyce of the Turtle is heard; a bird famous for mourning after her mate; when the time is come, that God ſtirres up his Prophets in *Iudah*, as *Zacharia*, *Habbakkuk* and others, when they begin to ſing; and good Levites and good Miniſters, tuning their notes, and tuning for

the good of the people, and Christ mourning for want of his Spouse, and for the hardnesse of mens hearts, and longing for the conversion of the people, and wooing and alluring them to come home unto him; when this is heard in the Land, there is the face of a spring: some shew of godly ones, to come on to the wayes of Gods grace, and so some hopefull springing buds arising in the hearts of Gods servants. This is one signe of the time of our visitation, when God beginnes thus to shine upon us by the light of his Gospell, and the beames of his Spirit, and knockes thereby at our hearts, and yet wee love to sleepe and will draw about us the curtaines of carnall security, and of our owne lusts. Now it is high time to awake; O yee Hypocrites, can yee tell when to arise in the morning, and when to goe about your businesse, and to stirre your selves about your labours, and cannot you tell when it is time to awake out of your blinde courses, wherein you have lyen so many yeares together.

2. The second time is the signes of the times of grace received, and that is worthy any mans knowledge, to know the time, when God hath risen to his heart, and had respect to the frame of his spirit, and promising faire weather; when the evening is red, you say it will bee faire weather, for the sky is red; so in this case, if God have beene pleased to vouchsafe to any Christian heart a blushing rednesse, a bright rednesse of countenance, for sence and shame of all his former evill

wayes, it is an evident signe of faire weather arising to the soule, *Ezra* 9.6. *O my God I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Heaven*: After that God had done all those great things for them, God had given them a naile in his Tabernacle, and had given them a breathing time, and yet now againe they have returned to evill: now sayes hee, *I am ashamed and blush to lift up mine eyes to Heaven*; so *Ezra* 10.2. *There is hope of Israel*, there is hope of *Reformation*, when God gives his people hearts to blush for shame for all the evils they have done in his sight, a signe God hath an intendment to doe them good; when a man blushes and shames for sin, it is a signe that he grieves for it as it is, vile and filthy; not as it is dangerous to his soule or breedes honour to his conscience, for that a man more feares, then he is ashamed of: when a man is ashamed of sinne in the presence of God, hee blushes at it, and his heart is confounded in him, for what hee hath done, *Ier.* 31.18, 19. *I am confounded and ashamed, because I did beare the reproach of my youth*: When therefore it pleases God to give a man a blushing shame; for that hee should live so long and understand so little; sees so many examples of Piety and Godlinesse before him, and himselfe so sinnefull, and is inwardly ashamed, and outwardly blushes at this; there is faire weather toward.

Yea further, there is faire weather towards though these red clouds do but appeare in the evening of a mans dayes, if in the evening of a mans

life, his heart be pierced with shame and blushing for all the vilenesse of his course before God, and unworthy dealing with God; that he should put God to it, to waite upon him so long; if there be then these red clouds of blushing, it is a good signe of an happy morning of resurrection in another world: on the other side, if as you read, *Ier.6.15.* they were not at all ashamed, they could not blush for all the evils they had done: therefore saith God in the day of their visitation they shall fall, and never rise againe; there is a signe of foule weather, when men are convinced of sinne, and yet cannot blush upon such occasions as this, then they shall fall and rise no more.

But as a second signe of faire weather, it was you heard, if the cloudes were thinne, and the bright beames of the Sunne had throwly pierced and inflamed them, so that no longer thickneesse and darkeneesse was remaining, the Sunne would soon dispatch them away; but when the sky is red and lowring, there is a signe of foule weather, because the Cloudes were too massie, too weighty and heavy to be remooved, and because of that, I am apt to thinke Christ would give us some light for interpretation of this word, by a word the Evangelist seemes to apply to this point, in what you read in the like case, concerning the young man in the Gospell, hee comes to Christ in the morning of his age, *Matth.19,16.* and *Mark.10.17.* Hee expreſt so much, as that the Text

ſaith, *Chriſt looked upon him and loved him*; there was a bluſh of colour of vertue in him, and had he come on and beene a bright cloud, and had beene throughly pierced, and enflamed with the beames of Chriſts love, hee had had faire weather in this world and in another, but hee could not yeeld to all that was laied downe before him, there was too much thicknesse in his heart; and the ſame word uſed heere for lowring is there uſed, *Mark.* 10. 22. *Hee was ſad at that ſaying*, in the Originall it is, σκυθρωπος, and ſo it is ſad and lowring; hee was laden with a deale of thicknesse, ſuch as would not ſuffer him to yeeld to Chriſt, but hee goes away lowring; when therefore it comes to this, that the beames of the bright light, and Sunne-ſhine of the Goſpell ſhines into the heart, and hee will ſet himſelfe to this duty, and to that, but in the end hee comes to meete with ſomething that is a little to unweildy for him, and then it comes to a σκυθρωπος, there will be a ſtorme that day; and thereupon ſaith our Saviour, *O how hard is it for a rich man to enter into the kingdome of Heaven*. Soe that you may eaſily ſee what a fearfull ſtorme waites upon ſuch a ſoule that hath a louring reſiſtance againſt the bright beames of the Lord Ieſus Chriſt, nay rather that riſes up againſt that light, hee will in the end bee red and louring, and that louring time of his is a foterunning ſigne, of a deſperate ſtorme that will drench ſuch a ſoule to the skinne, hee

shall fall, and be utterly cast downe; but otherwise when the soule is in this frame, that there is nothing to doe or suffer; but hee is ready to doe and suffer it, there is in him a blushing for shame of sinne committed, and there is no wrastling nor strugling against the wayes of Gods grace; but whatever light the Lord Iesus sends, hee is pierced through with it, and when then all mists are remooved and scattered, faire weather is then a comming on.

3. A third signe of the time of our visitation is in respect of the signes of the decayes of growth in grace. How may I know that grace is decaying, or that grace is growing, and there is signes of both.

First, You know it is a cause of darkening the Moone, if there be an interposition of the body of the Earth, betweene the Sunne and it, and it is a cause of the ecclipse of the Sun, when the body of the Moone is interposed betweene the Sunne and the Earth; so it is an evident signe of the decay of grace in any, when earthly things begin to take place in the heart of a man, when a man sets his heart upon earthly things, when they come betweene a mans heart and the Lord Iesus Christ the Sonne of Righteousnesse, then there is an ecclipse of grace, and that will grow more and more, and if there proove an ecclipse in this case, grace will decay. If that *David* fall upon *Bathsheba*, the staffe of his lively grace will be broken,

broken, when any thing takes up the heart, any lust whatsoever it will cloud and over-top the best seed of the word in a man; it will wholly darken the best hypocrites; and it dams up Gods peoples graces exceedingly, as in respect of the cares of this world; if a mans heart be set upon these, as that hee doth not enjoy the things of this life in the Lord and for the Lord, and from the Lord, but looses God in the creature; if a man loose Christ in the honours and pleasures of this world, there is an eclipse towards, and it is already begun. Whereas on the other side, if a man have and keepe an heart open to heavenly things, that the dewes of Heaven are not restrained, and the light of the Sunne is shining upon him, it is an evident signe of the increase of grace; when doth the Moone increase? is it not when she is gathering towards the Sunne, and the beames of the Sunne doe clearely cast themselves upon the Moon, and the nearer she gathers to the Sunne, she gathers and increaseth more and more in light; and when the Earth lyes most open to the dewes of Heaven, and the bright beames of the Sunne, is not then most fruitefull, *Job* 38.31. These were influences of the seven starrs, that rise in the spring and set in Autumne, and that bring sweet April showres; when the Earth lyes open to the dews of heaven, and so the bright beames of the Sunne, it growes warme and fruitefull, and so becomes both pleasurable and profitable: So when the

word

word of God (which the Holy Ghost compares to these sweet influences, *Deut.* 32. 2.) when a man comes to the word, and findes that the sweete influence of the Spirit there is not restrained nor straightned; but the word drops like Heavens dew upon his soule, and that upon all the parts of his soule and body, as being open to receive it; grace is springing now, and the fruits thereof is growing up in his soule, and it will thrive more and more, when hee sees the face of Christ in the Gospell, hee is transformed into the Image of Christ, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. and hee goes on from one glorious grace unto another, when there is nothing lies betweene a mans soule and Heaven, its a wonder to see the strange growth of it, otherwise if the case stand, as you read, *Levit.* 26. 19. when the Heaven is as yron, the Earth will soone be as brasse, when the heart beginnes to feele no power in Gods holy and pure ordinances, no bedewing of his soule, from these the heart will soone grow barren and unfruitfull, and will bring forth nothing but bryers and brambles; yea, and this may bee the case of Gods owne servants.

2. Another signe of grace decaying is this: If a Christian be growne up to some selfe-fullnesse, it is a fore-running signe of grace decaying, when you once become secure and to rest in the fullnesse of your owne strength, because the favour of God hath beene full upon you, and grace richly communicated to you; if you now grow bigg and full, then look for a wain shortly, when is the

Moon

Moone neareſt to its waine? is it not when ſhee is full in her owne orbe, though ſhee received it all from the brightneſſe of the Sunne: So ſoone as the Sunne is Eaſt and the Moone Weſt, the next quarter ſhee decreaſes, and ſo extinguiſheth, that ſhortly no beames of the Sunne will ſhine upon her: So is it with a Chriſtian; when was the Moone in full with *Peter*, was it not when hee came out with this ſaying, *Though all men deny thee yet will not I*, *Matth.* 26. 33,35. hee was very ſelfefull when hee thinkes hee can ſticke cloſer to Chriſt then all the reſt of his fellow Diſciples, and might you not then have fore-told him, what a woefull waine hee was now falling into, as indeed hee did that night, ſo *Pſalm.*30.6,7. *I ſaid in my proſperity I ſhall never be mooved*, it was full Moone now with *David*; but hee was ſoone in the waine, and preſently ſhattered, and not a ſparke of his heroyicall ſpirit left in him: Indeed, *Pſalm.* 3. *David* was in good plight, when his faith recovered againe, and then hee feared not for ten thouſand that roſe up againſt him; but otherwiſe when he begins to fall, his heart failes him; but when a man is full of the Lord Jeſus, ſtrong in his might and weake in himſelfe, *Prov.* 30. 2,3. When a man beginnes to finde himſelfe to bee nothing, and yet can doe more ſervice for God then his fellowes, 1 *Cor.*15.10. and knowes how to doe any thing through Chriſt that ſtrengthens him, *Phil.*4.11,12,13. that man is growing and thriving; and the more a man feeles his want of

Christ, the more hee cleaves to him, and the more he hath, the more hee would have of him, to stand fast in that liberty wherein Christ hath set him, now God *gives grace to the humble*, 1 *Pet.*5.5.

3. Thirdly, It is a signe of grace decaying, when a man growes heavy and drowsie and undisposed to good duties. When was it that the Disciples began to faile? was it not when Christ comes again and againe and findes them drowsie and heavy, *Matth.*26.41,42. when they could neither watch nor pray, and then the issue of it was, *they forsooke him.* Is it not a signe of sinne growing upon a man, When hee cannot hold open his eyes in a good duty? when a man growes drowsie in prayer and hearing, some temptation is now a growing fast upon him; but if a man grow more lively, and spirituall and vigilant, that man is in a faire way to stand fast in all temptations.

4. Now for the 4th. and last, and that is signes of the times of Judgement, both approaching and remooving, or of judgements remooving, or mercies approaching, and there are signs of both; both these times doe passe over us, and how shall wee discerne them? For this I cannot give you a better signe from the face of the sky then God himselfe gives in *Genesis*, *If you finde and perceive a bright raine-bow in a watery cloud, it is an evident signe the storme is a breaking up, and will be gone and blow over*, *Gen.*9.13,17. The Lord hath sworn he will no more over-flow the whole earth with waters, and therfore for a signe of the

Cove-

Covenant, hee hath set his bow in the cloud, and if it appeare the storme will shortly over. Now what is that? to apply it to the signes of the times of our visitation, when wee may know that a judgement is ready to remoove. What is Gods bow? In Scripture phrase, the bowe of a man, is the bent of a man. As *Joseph* his Bowe abode in strength, *Gen.*49.24. The bent of his spirit still stood at the full bent and strength in the midst of all discouragements, and did not slug it, though his Brethren, and his Mistris, and his Master, and every one shot sore at him, yet his bow abode in strength; it was old *Jacobs* blessing to him, and so the bent of his spirit abode in strength and in vigour, hee still held his integrity; then Gods bow is Gods bent; a signe that the storme is a blowing over, and faire weather is towards, what is the matter, if God but set a firme resolution, a spirituall gratious disposition, an inclining and bowing of the soule that hee bend the hearts of men to God, and to the waies of his grace, and that in a watery cloude, that is, in a soft and melting heart, then there is no judgement will lye long upon that soule, and no mercy will be long with-held from him; if the heart be strongly bent to walke with God, and that not in the pride of a mans spirit; but in a melting frame of spirit, such an one as this, whatever storms were upon him, now all judgements are a blowing over, and faire weather is towards, and such as that a man may know, there will be the brightnesse of Gods face upon his soule and

his favour to refresh his heart in all inward and outward occasions. *David* when he was full of his owne strength, suddenly in a cowardly manner (if I may so speake) his heart grew dead within him, yet before hee was got to *Mahanaim*, hee gathered up his spirits again, and girds up his vigour and strength afresh, and then hee got a firme bent of a Christian spirit; this is Gods bow in the soule of a Christian man; but what cloude was it in? Had it beene a stiffe resolution of his owne strength, it had failed him, but it was in a watery cloude, hee and his people went up to Mount *Olivet*, weeping, 2. *Sam.* 15.26. to 30. and was growne into such a melting frame, as that when the Priests would have carried the Arke after him, nay, saith hee, *Carry it backe againe: If the Lord say I have pleasure in David, he will bring me backe againe, but if not, here am I, let the Lord doe with me what seemeth him good:* Heere is now a melting watery cloude, the beams of the Sonne of righteousnesse had pierced it through, which fore-tels the ruine and destruction of all danger, and shewes that *Davids* restoring is neare. As the heart grows more humble and melting before God, and more firme and resolute in the Lords strength, so doth any calamity disperse it selfe, and any mercy breake in upon us: There are many excellent promises in *Job* 5.17. to the end of the Chapter, made to that soule, that is well taught and nurtured by affliction, and there are many other promises made to peace and acquaintance with God, *Iob* 22. from

from *verſ.* 21. to the end of the Chapter; now in ſuch a caſe as this, when this is the bent of a Chriſtian; when a man is ſo nurtured by affliction, as that hee growes more patient, and more humble and loving, and that a man thereupon acquaints himſelfe with God, and puts away all iniquity out of his heart and hands, and if God then help us to live humbly and meltingly under his hand, and we bleſſe him for his providence, it is ſuch an evident fore-runner of evill avoiding and good a comming, as indeed nothing is more; and this wee muſt bee ſenſible of, as ever we deſire to have any ſignes of comfortable dayes approaching, to grow ſtrong in our bent in the waies of grace, and in that meekeneſſe and lowlineſſe, and melting frame of heart, as that you may ſee Gods raine-bow is ſet in a watery cloude, looke now for all ſtormes to blow over, but if you ſee that the bent of a mans ſpirit begin to ſlug it, it is an evident ſigne of a ſtorme approaching; a weather gall, is but a peece of a rain-bow, and hangs not from one end of the sky to another; and ſo it is a fore-running ſigne of foule weather, which holds foorth thus much, when men will doe no more then they thinke good of, deale by peece-meale with God: a ſtorm is a comming to deal otherwiſe with them, if they belong to God; when the Church of *Epheſus* had unbent her ſpirit, and loſt her firſt love, would not now keepe ſo cloſe to God, nor manifeſt her ſelfe ſo much for God in a way of God, as ſometimes ſhe had done, it was a ſigne that darkeneſſe and trouble,

and danger was a comming to that Church, *Rev.* 2.3,4. And which is yet a worse signe, when a man is bent against God, and the wayes of his grace, and the Divels bow is set in a man, I know that then the Lord is determined to bring mischiefe upon such a man, 2 *Chron.*25.16. *I know the Lord is determined to destroy thee*, how did hee know that? Hee saw the Divels bow bent in the heart of the King, when hee saith to the *Prophet*, *Hold your peace who made you of the Kings counsell:* So that if you see the Divels bent in a man, that hee sets himselfe against God, and the wayes of his grace, hee will be left to most woefull mischiefe, according to that in 1 *Sam.*2.24,25. *They hearkened not to the voyce of their father, because the Lord would destroy them:* They would not bee ungirt from their wicked course they had beene addicted too, and that's a manifest signe that God will destroy them.

Vse 2. This serves to shew you, that it is not utterly unlawfull for men to make observation of the estate of the weather, and face of the sky; our Saviour doth not reproove it in them, but onely reprooves this, in that they were better skilled in the face of the sky, and signes of the weather, then in the signes of the times, *Luk.* 12.54,55. *When yee see a cloude rise out of the West, straightway yee say there comes a shore, and so it is, and when yee see the South winde blow, yee say there will be heate, and it commeth to passe*, &c. hee rejects not such kind of conjectures, there is a workemanship of God in them, nor doth hee mislike the study of nature. Let

Let what you have heard be a provocation to every soule of us to take heed and beware of hypocrisie, you see how loathsome it is to Christ, hee never speakes worse word then this, *O yee hypocrites*, when hee speakes with most detestation, yet this is the worst word hee speakes of any men, *O yee hypocrites*, and therefore farre be it from the spirits of Christian men, Abhorre you all seeds of hypocrisie, its very loathsome to God, when he threatens the worst evill to the worst sort of Ministers that ever the Church of God bore, *Matth.* 24.51. What will the Lord of such a Steward doe, when hee comes to give him his portion with hypocrites and unbeleevers, a man would be loath to be coupled with a drunken quarrelsome Roister, A man would blesse himselfe from fellowship with such a man while hee lives, yet if a man be an hypocrite, hee shall be ranked with such companions in hell; if therefore thou wouldest have no fellowship with such spirits and unfruitefull workes of darkenesse, blesse thy selfe from hypocrisie, *God loves truth in the inward parts*, *Psal.* 51.6. better lye open to lesse torment, then to be yoaked with such deboyst spirits in another world. *Vse* 3.

FINIS.